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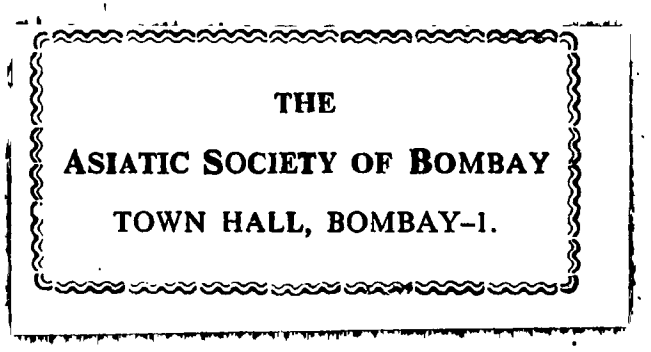

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THE LIFE

OF THE

RT. HON. SPENCER PERCEVAL.

VOL. II.

THE LIFE

OF THE

HON. SPENCER PERCEVAL

INCLUDING

HIS CORRESPONDENCE

WITH NUMEROUS DISTINGUISHED PERSONS.

BY HIS GRANDSON

SPENCER WALPOLE.

23643

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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ERRATA.—VOL. II.

Page 65, note, *for* 'Administration' *read* 'Administrations.'

Page 234, line 20, *for* 'Regulations' *read* 'Resolutions'

THE LIFE

OF

THE RIGHT HON. SPENCER PERCEVAL.

CHAPTER I.

THE BREAK-UP OF THE PORTLAND ADMINISTRATION.

1809.

Lamentable Consequences of the Duke of Portland's Secrecy—Conduct of Canning—Opinion of his Contemporaries—Perceval Prime Minister—Meeting of the Cabinet—Minute to the King—Interview with His Majesty—Canning's Conversation—Levee—Negotiations for the Formation of a Government—King's Answer to the Cabinet Minute—Failure of Negotiations for a Combined Government—Difficulties of the Situation—Lord Eldon—Meeting of Cabinet at Perceval's Residence.

In relating the very complicated events which had preceded the retirement of the Duke of Portland and the promotion of Perceval to the post of Prime Minister, it seemed advisable to abstain as far as possible both from comment and criticism. In the last chapter of the preceding volume, therefore, the chief actors in the history have been permitted to

tell their own story in their own way, and their narrative has only occasionally been interrupted by other matter. But, before we proceed to the consideration of the subsequent history of 1809, it may be desirable to offer a few general observations on the complicated circumstances with which the preceding chapters have been occupied. In doing so, it is impossible to pass over the lamentable consequences which proceeded from the Duke of Portland's well-intentioned but ill-judged secrecy. There can be no doubt that, in concealing from Castlereagh the charges which Canning had preferred against him, the Duke was actuated by the best and kindliest motives. There can be still less question that his decision was as mistaken as it proved unfortunate. Castlereagh would probably have retired in March, if his competency had been called into question at that time; but his place, both in the Cabinet and in the War-Office, would have been more than filled by Lord Wellesley. The procrastinating policy which postponed till September a question which should have been decided at the previous Easter, produced the ruin of the entire Administration.

It will probably be always doubtful how far Canning himself was responsible for this secrecy. His apologists, on the one hand, contend that he was ignorant of the concealment in March; that he protested against it in July; and that he remonstrated still more strongly with the Duke in August. His adversaries, on the other, reply that, though

he objected to the secrecy, he acquiesced in it. A really determined word from him must have made further concealment impossible, yet the word was never spoken. Plumer Ward, with Canning's own account of the matter before him, does not hesitate to describe his excuses as 'jesuitical.'[1] Ward's biographer indeed, in inserting the word, thinks it necessary to apologise for not omitting the expression. The apology is a singular instance of the reverence which Canning's memory has properly inspired. But it is obvious that, so far from an excuse being necessary for the publication of Ward's opinion, an apology would have really been due if his biographer had ventured on its suppression.

Whether Canning's conduct on this occasion was jesuitical or not, no critic will in this respect judge him with undue harshness. If he were culpable, he was less so than the Duke; while he bore the whole consequences of the concealment on his own person. But it is not possible to pronounce an equally lenient opinion on his conduct in other respects. Even his original remonstrance in March, 'probably one of the ablest papers which was ever penned,' is open to an objection. Occupying as he did one of the most prominent places in the Ministry, was it justifiable in him to imperil its existence because he was satisfied of the incompetency of one of his colleagues? He would have been on safer ground if he had con-

[1] Plumer Ward's Life, i. 245.

tented himself with opposing his colleague's advice, instead of imperilling the stability of the Administration by his own retirement from it. If, however, his conduct then be justifiable, on the ground that he hesitated to do an ungenerous act, what shall be said of his subsequent proceedings? With his opinion of Castlereagh's inefficiency, how could he permit him to initiate a far more important expedition than had hitherto been attempted? Was it consistent with his declared opinions? was it fair to the colleague whom he had denounced? was it compatible with his duty to his country? But let us go a little further. Lord Mulgrave positively asserts that Canning had expressed himself ready to serve under Lord Chatham.[1] How can this assertion be reconciled with his contention that *a* Minister, and that Minister in the House of Commons, was indispensable? If he was really ready to serve under Lord Chatham, why was Perceval's proposal that a third person should be agreed on summarily rejected? These, however, are mere inconsistencies; the part which he played subsequently in the transaction deserves a harsher name. Even if we assume that he was entitled to assert his own pretensions to the lead, how can we excuse the steps which he took for reconciling Perceval to his supersession? Either he was or was not in earnest in proposing that the latter should receive the Presidency of the Council

[1] Plumer Ward, i. 215.

with a peerage and the Chancellor of the Duchy for life. If he were not in earnest, he was obviously guilty of gross treachery to his colleague; if he were, he must have made up his mind to disregard the express decision of the House of Commons. The proposal that Perceval should receive the Chancellorship was even less defensible. It was no doubt possible that Canning's Administration might be formed on principles which would have made Lord Eldon's retention of the Great Seal inexpedient. But it was inconceivable that any circumstances could arise which would make his Lordship's supersession by Perceval desirable. For Lord Eldon and Perceval were politicians with the same views, committed to the same policy. Canning's suggestion, that the one should be superseded by the other, can only be regarded as the proposal of a man who was ready to adopt any expedient for the sake of securing his own advancement.

Nor is it possible to excuse the manner in which he preferred his own claims. He had himself admitted that the easiest arrangement, the one which would cause no regret to himself, was the devolution of the Duke's office on Perceval. Whatever others might have done, he at any rate ought to have abstained from subsequently advancing his own claims to the post. Yet it is evident that, at his interview with the King, he put forward his own case in the strongest manner. According to a memorandum of Arbuthnot's among Perceval's

papers, Canning, so late as the 19th September, was frequently with the Duke, and told him that, 'even now, he would undertake to form an Administration. He could have done it with ease a week ago.' There is only one explanation of these repeated statements. Canning was bidding high for office; and he failed.

The opinion which contemporary observers formed of this conduct was never doubtful:—

'I have seen,' the Solicitor-General (Plumer) wrote to Perceval on the 14th September, 'Wellesley Pole, Arbuthnot, and Long, all of whom were fully apprised of the state of things, and all equally unable to suggest what was best to be done; but all, I am happy to say, concur in lamenting and condemning the conduct of the person who has occasioned the principal difficulty.'

'Canning,' wrote W. Brodrick, 'has exceeded in duplicity everything that I thought possible even in a politician.'[1]

'His (Canning's) conduct,' wrote Lord Eliot, 'appears to be rash and overbearing, which perhaps was not to be wondered at. But I am concerned and surprised that it should not have been fair and open; for I felt a respect for him, and had given him credit for those qualities.'[2]

The Opposition spoke even more bitterly. 'Talking of shuffling naturally brings to one's mind Canning,' wrote Brougham.[3]

Such were the opinions entertained of Canning's

[1] Brodrick to Perceval, 19 Sept. 1809.
[2] Lord Eliot to Perceval, 19 Sept. 1809.
[3] Brougham's 'Autobiography,' i. 479.

conduct by some of the more prominent men of the day. It is now necessary to turn from the Minister who had resigned to the Minister who remained in. Perceval, on the receipt of the King's instructions, which have been given in the concluding words of the last chapter of the first volume, summoned a meeting of the remaining members of the Cabinet, and wrote to Rose, Bourne, and other leading supporters of the Duke of Portland's Administration, to come immediately to town. The Cabinet, with the exception of the Duke himself, Canning, Lord G. Leveson-Gower, Castlereagh, and Lord Chatham (who, 'under the circumstances in which he was placed,' from the failure of the expedition which he had commanded, considered that it would not be 'proper' for him to attend), met, on the 18th September, in Perceval's house in Downing Street. The substance of the Minute which was then agreed upon will be found in the Speaker's Diary. But the Minute itself is of such historical importance that it seems desirable to preserve it entire :—

'Sept. 18. At the house of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

'Present: The Lord Chancellor, the Lord President, the Lord Privy Seal, Earl Liverpool, Earl Bathurst, Earl Harrowby, Lord Mulgrave, Mr. Perceval.

'Your Majesty's confidential servants above named have, in obedience to your Majesty's commands, taken into their most serious consideration the present state of the administration of your Majesty's Government, in consequence of the intended resignation of the Duke of Portland, Lord Castle-

reagh, and Mr. Canning, which they have reason to apprehend may be followed by that of Lord G. Leveson Gower. They have directed their attention, in the first instance, to the consideration of the question how far it would be practicable for the remainder of your Majesty's servants, after so important a defalcation of strength, to carry on the executive government of the country, with advantage to your Majesty, without additional strength from any new arrangement of the offices of government amongst themselves. They have examined that question with reference to the state of both Houses of Parliament. In the House of Lords the persons in opposition to your Majesty's Government form certainly, at present, a most formidable party, consisting of not less than 110 or 112 members of that house. The events which are about to happen can scarcely fail in some degree to add to their number, and to diminish proportionally that of the persons who support your Majesty's Government. But this addition of strength on the one hand, or diminution of it on the other, would probably not be considerable; and, though it is impossible to say that your Majesty's Government in the House of Lords would be as strong as would be desirable, under all the circumstances of the present times, they would nevertheless be sufficiently strong (if the question was confined to that house only) to afford your Majesty's present servants a reasonable expectation that they could carry on your Majesty's Government without the necessity of looking to any addition of strength from other quarters. The state of the House of Commons is far more unfavourable. Your Majesty must have been aware of the difficulties which occurred in the conduct of the business of Government in that house during the last Session of Parliament; and that the strength of Government did scarcely at any time appear more than equal, and on some occasions not sufficient to oppose the difficulties to which they were exposed. There can be no reason to believe that these difficulties will be less considerable in the next session, especially when your

Majesty shall consider, not only the disappointments which have attended the exertions of your Majesty's arms in the course of the present year, but also the new taxes which the necessities of the country will require to be imposed. And the loss of the active support of two such members of the Government as Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Canning,[1] and of

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[1] The Ministry had originally hoped that Canning, though he retired from the Government, would have given them a general support. On the 16th September, however, Canning wrote to Perceval: 'Rose, whom I have just seen, and who has reported to me your conversation with him, appears to have an impression upon his mind that you stated me to have promised, in the event of my resignation, to *support in Parliament any Government which you and the rest of my colleagues might form.*

'Upon this point I am very desirous that there should not exist any misunderstanding. I am not aware of having spoken on the subject to any person except the King, and I am *very certain* that the King cannot have so understood what I said to His Majesty.

'I feel myself under the necessity of requesting that you will have the goodness to let me know whether Rose collected aright what you meant to convey to him upon this point.

'It can hardly be necessary for me to remark to you, at the same time, that my anxiety, not to be supposed to have given *a pledge* which I have not given, is perfectly compatible with every feeling of personal goodwill towards you, no less than with every principle and sentiment of dutiful affection and attachment to His Majesty.'

'If Rose,' replied Perceval on the same day, 'has the impression upon his mind, which you say he appeared to have, that I stated to him that you had *promised*, in the event of your resignation, to *support in Parliament* any Government which I and the rest of my colleagues might form, he certainly did not collect aright what I meant to convey to him upon that point. I think your desire that there should be no misunderstanding on this

those who may personally adhere to them, cannot fail to place your Majesty's servants in the House of Commons in a most critical situation, such as no new arrangement of the offices of Government among themselves appears likely adequately to remedy. Your Majesty's servants have been anxious, therefore, to consider whether it was probable that any addition of strength could be obtained to your Government from individuals not at present connected with it. With this view they have endeavoured to ascertain

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point so natural, that I hasten to assure you that I never understood you to have made any such promise to anyone.

'I have no doubt that I stated to Rose (what I certainly understood you to say in arguing against the opinion which I entertained that your resignation was in effect equivalent to dissolving the Government) that you were of opinion that a sufficiently strong Government could be formed if I were placed at the head of it; and that the support, which I certainly understood you to intend, but as certainly never to pledge or to promise to give, would in fact be of essential use.'

Canning was not satisfied with this explanation. 'My goodwill towards yourself,' he replied on the same day, 'you do not overrate. But you must have misunderstood me, if you conceived me to say that even to you "I *intended*" to give a support which I believed would be "of essential use."

'This phrase is one which I should not have presumed to use; but it leads me to the recollection of what I did say, and on what occasion I did say, that, in the peculiar circumstances in which we stood towards each other, any support of mine to you at the head of the Government would, in my opinion, be more useful if I were *out of office* myself than if I were acting under you *in* office. And this was stated, as you justly observe, in an argument between us upon an hypothetical and contingent case, and not as a profession of intention upon a case actually existing.'—*Perceval Papers.*

Two further letters subsequently ensued between the same correspondents on the subject; but the extracts which have already been given from the correspondence will be sufficient to show the drift of it without any additional quotations.

whether, in any contingency, there was a probability of being able to persuade the Speaker of the House of Commons to accept of a political situation; but the communication, which has been made to him, has led to a very candid but decisive explanation on his part, in which he states that he has long determined never to quit his present situation, as long as the House of Commons will accept of his services, and his health enables him to discharge the duties of it.[1]

'Your Majesty's servants feel it material to add that they understand that the same obstructions on the part of Lord Hardwicke, which prevented Mr. Yorke[2] from accepting office some months ago, are likely to operate with equal force at the present moment.

'Lord Wellesley's absence in Spain prevents your Majesty's servants from ascertaining his sentiments.

'Your Majesty's servants are at present in doubt what line Lord Melville and his friends will be disposed to take under the present circumstances. To ascertain this point,

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[1] The offer was made by Perceval himself on the 12th September, and positively declined on the 13th. The correspondence will be found at length in Colchester, ii. 204.

[2] Perceval had already communicated with Yorke, and a long correspondence ensued between them. Yorke held out, at first, hopes of joining; but Lord Hardwicke was obdurate. 'I think it proper'—so Yorke wrote to Perceval on the 10th October—'without further loss of time, and in order to prevent yourself and others from being misled, to acquaint you that, from some correspondence with my brother, Lord H., subsequent to my last communication with you, it should seem that I must have very much misconceived his Lordship's meaning and intentions with reference to the present state of public affairs, which I am heartily sorry for. . . . . The result is that you will be so good as not to think any more of me as an *official* supporter on this occasion, though you may rely upon me in the *House* whenever I am able to attend, as well as on my best wishes and prayers—I wish I could add auguries.'

most expeditiously, Mr. Dundas has been sent for from Ireland; and it was at one time a serious question with your Majesty's servants whether they should offer any opinion to your Majesty on this subject before they had had an opportunity of collecting from him his sentiments, and those of his friends.[1] But in the interval they have found reason to

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[1] Perceval, on the 12th September, had informed Dundas of the resignation of the Duke of Portland, and had requested him 'not to form any opinion, much less any decision, upon this step until you hear from me again;' and Dundas had replied, 'I shall certainly comply with your desire in refraining from coming to any decision till I hear from you again; indeed I should at any rate be desirous of corresponding with my father on a subject of this nature; and, whatever may eventually be my own sentiments on the matter, I should not wish to adopt any course that might possibly be at variance with opinions which he may have expressed to myself, or may now convey to others.' The letter was dated from Dublin, and was immediately followed by another, in which the writer announced his intention of coming immediately to England. On his arrival he had frequent interviews with Perceval. He admitted at these that his 'natural and oldest connexion was with Canning;' but his duty to 'support the King' was so clear that he was ready to take office under Perceval. It was consequently arranged that he should succeed Castlereagh in the Colonies. At the same time he intimated his father's strong disposition to support the Ministry in any way. Perceval evidently understood the intimation to imply that Lord Melville was desirous of obtaining Cabinet office; and, in consequence, wrote to him on the 5th October a very long and able letter, in which, while he communicated the King's commands to offer Lord Melville an earldom, he reviewed the reasons which made him conclude that his Lordship's accession to office was undesirable.[2] Palmerston styles this letter 'more frank, perhaps, than cautious.' Phipps, in his 'Life of Plumer Ward,' says that it did more credit to

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[2] Perceval to Lord Melville, 19th September.—*Perceval Papers.*

apprehend that Mr. Canning's resignation would diminish the strength of your Majesty's Government to an extent so

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Perceval's 'frankness than to his judgment.'[1] Ward, on the contrary, writing at the time, calls it 'Perceval's admirable letter.' Dundas himself, writing immediately afterwards, says, 'I am quite sure that you have done perfectly right in stating to my father all you feel in regard to him. . . . . You may depend upon it that a full explanation with him was indispensable, if you expect (as I think you will receive) benefit from his cordial support and assistance, even out of office, and not in the Cabinet.' It is fair, therefore, to assume that Ward's judgment was more correct than his biographer's; and that Perceval's long letter did not display the want of judgment Phipps assumes. Lord Melville refused the offer of the earldom, but disclaimed any desire for 'a return to office.' But in a few days matters were changed. Dundas, who had again gone for a short stay to Dublin, found, on his second return to London, two letters from Lord Melville waiting his arrival, couched, as he expresses it to Perceval on the 15th, 'in both an altered and a frigid tone.' The epithets were not too strong. 'Lord Melville,' wrote Perceval on the 17th to Lord Eldon, 'has disappointed the expectations which his letter had raised, and flung us into the greatest state of embarrassment. His son, upon his return from Ireland, found two letters from his father, in which he has dissuaded him in the strongest manner, as a friend and a father, not to take any new situation under the new arrangement. He talks to him of his connexions, mentioning the Duke of Buccleuch and Lord Lonsdale, and referring to others, whose support of the Administration was at least doubtful, unless he, Lord Melville, as they had been wishing for two years, formed part of it.' Dundas, Perceval went on, 'now says that he cannot, without further explanation from his father, accept the new office.' 'I cannot see my way,' replied Lord Eldon on the next day, 'through the cloud which M.'s letter to R.D. has cast around us. I can only hope that the strange and awkward situation, in which

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[1] 'Memoirs,' i. 263, 269, where the letter will be found.

much beyond what they expected, that they think, even on the supposition that Lord Melville's friends would cordially

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he has placed his son and us, may appear to him so strange and awkward as to induce him, upon representation of the whole case by R.D., to change the advice he has given to R.D., or at least to leave him to act as he intended. If R.D. fails us, and the Scotch legion go against us, I fear there is no chance of standing, even if we can settle a beginning after this unexpected blow.' So unexpected was the blow that Lord Melville's own relatives took the unusual step of stating to Perceval their approval of his conduct. His nephew, William Dundas, wrote 'approving highly of your letter to my uncle.' His son, to whom Perceval had forwarded a full copy of it, answered that it was unexceptionable and most complete. 'I wish,' he went on, 'I could add that I had perused it without any feeling of regret or mortification at the reception which it has met with; but I can't enter further on that subject. Perhaps I may yet be enabled to mark my sense of your conduct in this matter by something more than mere words.'[1]

The prospect which this correspondence opened to the new Ministry would have been black enough if Lord Melville had maintained his views. Happily, however, 'his friends convinced him that he was wrong to take this line.' Dundas was ultimately permitted to take the Presidency of the Board of Control. ('Perceval Correspondence,' Colchester, ii. 218.) But the danger had proved the difficulty in which the Cabinet was placed. Perceval, writing privately to his brother-in-law on the 24th October, used this remarkable expression: 'Rose and Long both have declined accepting the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. I shall therefore not succeed in my plan of dividing my two offices—at least at present. This is not without its embarrassments; *but Dundas is the grievance.*' 'His Majesty' (the King had written characteristically seven days before) 'is fully aware of the extent of the present difficulties, and laments that they should have occurred; *but His Majesty has*

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[1] Perceval Papers.

support them, that it would be misleading your Majesty to recommend the formation of a Government from amongst themselves.

'They have ascertained that Mr. Sturges Bourne and Mr. Huskisson are so connected with Mr. Canning that they desire to retire with him. They have too much reason to apprehend that Mr. Rose will adopt the same resolution. Mr. Long has also given notice of his intention to resign,[1]

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drawn his line, and no prospect of embarrassment or opposition shall induce him to shrink from it.' [2]

[1] Sturges Bourne had been brought into Parliament by Canning, and from the first determined to go out with him: so he told Rose on the very first intimation he received of the crisis. A day or two afterwards he wrote again to Rose:—'I lament sincerely the predicament in which Perceval is placed, his conduct being perfectly consistent with the strict honour and integrity with which it has always been marked.' Such was the opinion of one who, it must be remembered, had determined irrevocably to side with Canning. (Rose, ii. 369, 351.) Huskisson's case was more singular. On the 18th of August he had written to Perceval that, 'without being conscious of any abatement of my disposition to make myself useful to the public, without a particle of ill-humour to anyone, and with every kind of grateful feeling to yourself in particular, it would be impossible for me, if the Government remains in its present state and proceeds in its present course, with reference to the manner in which public expenditure is controlled and directed, to take an active part in bringing forward measures founded upon a system, or rather perhaps upon a want of system, which I believe in my conscience will, if persevered in, lead, at no great distance of time, to consequences most distressing to the King and prejudicial to the country.' Perceval wrote to him, three days afterwards, a long reply, in which he promised to lay his views of finance before the Cabinet; and added, 'When a

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[2] George III. to Perceval, 17th Oct. 1809.

and your Majesty will not fail to perceive how much more serious the loss of the support of these gentlemen will be in

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person so important to the Government as yourself uses such language, it becomes indispensably necessary to me in my situation in the Government, and especially in my official connexion with you, to endeavour, as exactly as possible, to understand what it is you mean. . . . . If you mean that you cannot continue to act with us unless a system of diminished expenditure . . . . is adopted, I think I understand you. . . . . But the expression of Government continuing in its present state, and proceeding in its present course, ... seems to mean more; and I doubt whether it does not mean what, in my opinion at least, under the present circumstances, is practically unattainable. Our administration is so constructed that . . . it is next to impossible that we should have such a controlling power as you have been used to see exist with advantage, and consequently wish for again. There never can be the sort of acquiescence amongst us in control as there was naturally and necessarily in Mr. Pitt. Mr. Pitt . . . . had himself such comprehensive talents and powers that he was himself essentially the Government in all its departments. . . . . But the present Government is constituted with so many of equal or nearly equal pretensions that it . . . . must, to a great degree, be and remain a Government of departments. It is not because the Duke of Portland is at our head that the Government is a Government of departments; it is because the Government is and must be essentially a Government of Departments that the Duke is at our head.

* * * * *

'In the present state of the Duke's health we cannot contemplate his long continuing in his present situation; we cannot, therefore, well avoid considering what is likely to happen. . . . . The person I should like best to act under as the head of the Government is Lord Harrowby. . . . . I think he would conciliate the most of public and individual feeling of anyone we could have. Next to him I think Lord Bathurst would be most generally acceptable. Under either of these, with a little explanation and better understanding as to my own situation, I should be prepared

impression upon others, than merely from their numerical weight. Their characters for efficiency, as men of business,

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to act. . . . . You will not, I am sure, be surprised at my desire to know whether such a change in the controlling part of Government as I have been describing would meet your ideas; because, in any communication which events may lead to with either of these noble Lords, I should not be acting fairly by him if, with reason to doubt whether you would continue to hold your present situation, I omitted to mention that doubt, as it would possibly much influence his determination upon the subject itself.' Huskisson replied upon the 24th, declining to say what course he should take in the event of the Duke of Portland's retirement. 'In my view of the case the removal of a minister is a virtual dissolution of the Government.' 'Until I know who the minister is to be; who are to be his colleagues; and what departments they may fill; and, upon that knowledge, can form my own judgment; I can say nothing one way or the other as binding me beforehand to any individual or any particular line of conduct.' Such were Huskisson's views at the end of August. In the middle of September Perceval sounded him again. 'I should not be free from my own reproaches,' replied Huskisson on the 15th, 'or undeserving of yours, were I for a moment to conceal from you that, under the circumstances, which you have stated as likely to determine the conduct of Bourne, I should feel myself at liberty to take a different course. At the time we were all separated and set loose by the death of Mr. Pitt, the political attachment I then formed was certainly with Canning; and, with my views on this subject and my personal feelings towards him, I must beg leave to retire from my present situation.'

Rose characteristically deferred his decision till he had seen his son. The latter and all his family were, however, unanimous that it was his duty to support the King. 'I feel it quite impossible,' he wrote to Sturges Bourne on the 19th September, 'to be a party to breaking up the Government, because he (Canning) failed in obtaining the situation of First Lord of the Treasury, when Perceval (the other competitor) would have acquiesced in Canning's naming a third person. I do wrong, indeed, in describ-

justly give great consideration to them. Long and steadily as they have been connected in Government with Mr. Pitt and his friends, and particularly acquainted as they are known to be with the state of the House of Commons, their retirement will be considered as indicating a well-informed opinion of an almost total disunion of Mr. Pitt's old connexions, and of the want of strength in your Majesty's administration; and, it is to be feared, it will be followed to a considerable extent, and will guide the judgment and conduct of others.

'Your Majesty's servants, therefore, cannot forbear from adding that the formation of a Government, without the assistance of some strength from the persons now opposed to them, which they had considered, independent of the resignation of those gentlemen, as very difficult, is, from that circumstance rendered infinitely more so, if not impossible.

'Your Majesty's servants cannot here omit calling to your Majesty's notice that, though they conceive it to be next to impossible for *them* to form a Government without assistance from their opponents, your Majesty may collect

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ing Perceval as a competitor, for, in truth, he disclaimed from the beginning the remotest intention of looking to the situation.' (Rose, ii. 354.)

The anticipations that Long would resign proved correct in the first instance. 'In determining,' he wrote to Perceval on the 18th September, 'to resign my office upon the present occasion, ... I beg to assure you that I do not take that step from objecting in the slightest degree to any part of the conduct you have held on the late very embarrassing circumstances. That conduct, I have no doubt, was correct, as it has been perfectly so in my opinion on every occasion on which I have had any opportunity of witnessing it.' Long, however, was subsequently induced to reconsider his determination; and, though he refused the brilliant offer of the Chancellorship of the Exchequer which Perceval made him, he accepted a subordinate office in the Ministry.

from Mr. Canning's letter to the Duke of Portland (which your Majesty directed Mr. Perceval to lay before them) that he conceives a Government might be formed under him. The expediency, therefore, of your Majesty's sending to Mr. Canning, and requiring him to use his endeavours for that purpose, is one of the considerations on which your Majesty will have to determine. Your Majesty's servants, however, ought not to disguise from your Majesty that in their apprehension Mr. Canning's attempt to form a Government, without external assistance, would be attended with difficulties as many, and of a similar nature to those which they have described as attendant upon an attempt by themselves.[1]

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[1] The best proof that this was not an exaggerated opinion will be found in the account of Perceval's conversation with the King (*vide* in the text, *infra*, p. 22); but other proofs of the general distrust of Canning will be familiar to all readers of political history (*vide*, for instance, Twiss's 'Eldon,' ii. 90). Next to Lord Eldon, Lord Harrowby and Lord Liverpool were, perhaps, the two most important members of the Administration. Of Lord Harrowby's sentiments there can be no doubt. He had been the earliest of Perceval's friends; he was still the most intimate of them. Lord Liverpool had stated his views to Perceval on the 3rd September, in a letter of such importance that it may be desirable to quote it: 'I cannot think,' he wrote, 'that Canning, by consenting to your being Minister, would bring any personal degradation upon himself. It would make no alteration either in *his office* or in his *present station* in the House of Commons; and if, in consequence of the other arrangements, he should be the only Secretary of State in that House, the nature of his office and the character of his talents would secure to him a degree of consideration in the House, in the Government, and in the country, upon the whole, perhaps, not inferior to your own.

'But, by your consenting to *his* being *Minister*, you would relinquish both your *present office* and your *present station* in the House of Commons. There is no other office which you would be

'Under these circumstances the question arises, whether any and what additional assistance can be procured from those who at present are usually opposed to your Majesty's servants?

'Your Majesty's servants have adverted, in the first place, to the persons connected with Lord Sidmouth. But the object of recurring to any external strength is to obtain additional and effective assistance. The numbers of this party are but small; and it appears evident that so strong a prejudice has been created in the minds of many persons, who support your Majesty's administration at present, against Lord Sidmouth and his friends, in consequence of the part taken by them in the last year of Mr. Pitt's administration, that there is every reason to believe, that more friends would probably be lost by an attempt to connect Lord Sidmouth with the Government, than would be gained by the numbers which he would be able to bring with him. It remains, therefore, to consider the expediency of applying to Earl Grey and Lord Grenville, or to both. From every information your Majesty's servants have been able to collect, they are satisfied it would not be possible to procure the assistance of one of these noble lords without the other; and, even if

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disposed to accept, which would give you any relative weight or consequence there, or would make your situation as second to him at all to be compared to his situation as second to you.

'I am therefore of opinion that the latter event could not take place without your defeating, in a great measure, the means which you certainly possess of being essentially useful to the country and to the King.

'Independent of these considerations I may add, in confidence, that I am convinced that this latter arrangement would meet with other difficulties, which would prove at the present time insurmountable.' 'N.B.,' wrote Perceval against the passage, 'what these are I do not know' (Perceval Papers). Yet Campbell, in his 'Lives of the Chancellors,' declares that the majority of the Cabinet were in favour of superseding Perceval with Canning!

the separate assistance of either could have been obtained, yet the nature of the present times, and the exigencies of your Majesty's service, indisputably require as strong a Government as may be found; and, considering the loss of strength which the resignation of Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Canning, and the other persons above mentioned, will occasion, increased also as it must in a degree be expected to be by the effect of an application to any persons now opposed to the administration, nothing short of the united strength of both can counterbalance that loss.

'Your Majesty's servants, therefore, feel it to be their duty to state to your Majesty, after anxiously, repeatedly, and maturely weighing all the foregoing considerations, and every part of the important question submitted to them by your Majesty, that in their humble opinion it would be most expedient that your Majesty's confidential servants should be commanded to make a direct communication to Lord Grey and Lord Grenville, with a view of uniting with them in forming an extended and combined administration.'

Perceval enclosed this minute to the King in a letter, in which he offered himself to attend at Windsor on the following day. Of the interview, which he then had with the King, he wrote a detailed account to Lord Liverpool:—

'The King told me,' he writes, 'he must give me an account of Canning's conversation, which he called the most extraordinary he ever heard. He went through it with perfect accuracy. . . . All that is now important is that, in the King's impression, ... it was very little different from his letter, except that it was more explicit and more strong; and except that he distinctly stated to the King, as his opinion, that the Duke of Portland's health was such that it was not possible he should retain his situation. The

points, in which he was more precise, were that the Minister, who must in these times be necessarily in the House of Commons, must also necessarily have *complete authority* over all departments; that, at the present time, he and I were the only persons that *could* be this Minister, not only in the present Administration, but in any part of the House; that he should not be surprised or displeased in the least if the King preferred me; that it would be the most rational[1] thing of the two; it would hardly require a new patent; only the insertion of a name in the old one; but that, if His Majesty honoured him with his commands, *he would readily undertake it.* "Not," said the King, "that he would consider of it, that he would advise with others, as you, or any other person, would have said, but he was fully prepared to undertake it. Now," continued His Majesty, "I do not believe, if he was to be the Minister, that there is any one of you who would continue with him, and he does not seem at all to think of that?" I told him I had no authority to say or means of knowing that none of his present servants would continue. I thought some certainly would not; but I could not pretend to speak for anyone but myself. I told him that, when I had penned the passage in the minute, in which it was said that His Majesty might collect from Mr. Canning's letter that he would undertake it, I had been almost afraid that I might have drawn an inference beyond what was intended. "Oh, no," he said, "he stated it to me most distinctly."[2] . .

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[1] So in the copy, but probably should be 'natural.'

[2] It is almost incredible, after this account, to find that Canning subsequently took credit for having advised the King to appoint Perceval. Yet such was the case. 'I am glad to find,' he wrote to Perceval himself on the 2nd October, 'that the principle which I took the liberty of stating with respect to the formation of a new Government is so fully admitted, after so full a deliberation, as it appears to be, by the devolution of the Duke of Portland's office upon you. I venture to hope that the nonsense and the calumnies which I have seen for the last

'He then proceeded to the subject of the minute of the Cabinet. He said he would consider of it very maturely; and could not deliver any opinion then. I assured him I had not expected one; I only thought he might wish to see me, and converse upon various points of it. He was very glad I had come, he said; was glad to talk to me upon it; that he should talk to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Liverpool, and others, upon it to-morrow. He knew, indeed, that they could not represent it in any other view than had been done in the paper. But it was a decision for life; everything was at stake; and he must not come to that decision without the maturest consideration. . . . He seemed disappointed at the opinion leading to a communication both with Lord Grey and *Lord Grenville*. The latter evidently formed, as we anticipated, the great objection. He would do nothing upon it, he said, till he was satisfied of one point, the Catholic Question. When he was advised last to send to Mr. Pitt by the Lord Chancellor, he had required to have expressly from Mr. Pitt that he would not bring forward that question; that he had the most direct assurance from Mr. Pitt in writing. . . . He must, he said, have a similar assurance now; that this was a point he could not give up in honour. No more, he said, could I; that I, as well as he, had both given our opinions upon that point solemnly to the country, that we could not give them up. I agreed that we could not give them up; that his servants were unanimous in their opinion that he must be protected against that question; that it was with that view and upon that principle that they had humbly given His Majesty their opinion which that paper contained; that they thought, under the circumstances of the times, that it was the most effectual, if not the only effectual, means of pro-

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week in the Ministerial papers, directed against me upon this subject, must now subside. *I have at last the King's sanction for the advice which I humbly presumed to offer.*'—*Perceval Papers.*

tecting him; that if Lord Grey and Lord Grenville consented to form a Government with us, who were known to have such decided opinions upon that subject, they must come into that Government with a perfect knowledge that that measure could never have been a measure of that Government; that this would necessarily be *implied* from the very formation of the Government. It must be *expressed*, he said, or he could not be satisfied. I stated that it did not appear to me possible to expect that Lords Grey and Grenville could, as men of honour, consent, after all that had been said upon this subject, to have even the question put to them to require an express declaration upon this. "Then," said he, "I am driven to the wall, and would be deserted." I assured His Majesty again that the object of his present servants was to protect him; they would not desert him; that the opinion we had submitted to His Majesty was, as we thought, the best mode of protecting him; that, if we made an ineffectual attempt to form an Administration alone, we should be overthrown, and would not be able to stand between him and the wall. "Then," said he (rather hastily, but very collectedly and firmly), "they should take the Government to themselves; he would have nothing to do with it, they should not have his name." "Oh! Sir," said I, "what an extremity your Majesty is contemplating! What would become of your Majesty's country?" "No country had a right to expect a man should give up his own honour; his honour was in his own keeping; if his country deserted him, he could not help it." I again assured His Majesty that deserting him was the last thing they ever thought of. But we conceived that the combined Government, which we had an idea of forming, was to be formed by His Majesty's present servants, and with such a proportion of them, that, having a full share in the efficient offices, we should, by refusing at any time, as we should refuse, to concur in any measure of that description, be enabled to put a stop to it, by bringing the Government

to an end; they would feel this, and that they therefore would naturally not think of attempting it. He then asked what reason we had for thinking they would form such a Government. I said that we could not fully, without making an overture to them, have found their real sentiments, but that we had reason, from various conversations of their friends, to think it probable they would not generally object, though undoubtedly we could not tell in what manner they would expect it to be made. He asked what these conversations were; I told him Lord Henry Petty's to Lord Euston; Lord Grey's to Colonel Gordon; Lord George Cavendish's to Lord William Bentinck. But then, he said, what is to be done if they refuse? I said we had not omitted to think of that; but that the manner of their refusing, and the grounds on which they refused, might be so various, and it would depend so much upon them, that there was no possibility beforehand of distinctly saying what would in that event be to be done till the event occurred. Then he asked how it was to be done? I suggested the letter to both, at once, stating His Majesty's commands that they should communicate with us, and that we should jointly consider on the formation of a Government, and that we had his commands; also, to acquaint them that, if they wished to see His Majesty first, His Majesty would see them. That would be very hard upon him, he said; he had no means of letting the world know what might pass; they might tell their own story. The last time he had the good fortune to have it in writing: that would not do; he could not see them lest[1] he knew from us what they were prepared to do; that he was the worst person in the whole world to settle any point with them; he was sure he should quarrel with them at the first setting out. I said that certainly would not answer any purpose; that it was

[1] So in the copy, but probably should be 'till.'

certainly an important consideration that His Majesty might think of, but that we had considered that it would be better to offer them the alternative. Then he asked whether I thought I alone should communicate with them, or I and any one else. I said that, as there were to be two of them, I thought it preferable that there should be some one joined with me. He agreed in this, and suggested the Chancellor as the person. I explained the Chancellor's objection, from the various instances of personal conflict in which he had been engaged with them. "What," says he, impatiently, "do you think I would be advised to form a Government without the Chancellor?" "By no means," I said. I thought that the present Chancellor must be one of the Government; that your Lordship must form another; that I considered this as indispensable. He then seemed to be satisfied as to the reason for not joining the Chancellor with me; and canvassed the question whether it should be you or Lord Bathurst, or who else; and this as well as other questions were left open for our further consideration.'

On the following day there was a levee; and the King spoke to the remainder of 'His Ministers upon the subject, including Lord Chatham, who concurred with the rest in the advice given by the minute of the 18th inst., and he afterwards sent a full, able, and dignified answer to the minute, distinctly, though reluctantly, authorising the negotiations.'[1]

The King's answer is of such importance that it must be inserted in full:—

[1] Colchester, ii.

'*Windsor Castle, Sept.* 22, 1809.

'The King having considered, with the attention which the importance of the subject requires, the contents of the Minute of Cabinet transmitted to him by Mr. Perceval, with a letter of the 18th instant; having duly weighed all that has since been submitted to him, verbally on the same subject, by those of his confidential servants who attended that meeting; and, having reflected seriously upon the general situation of the country, the unfortunate state of affairs, and the difficulties of every description which occur; has determined, impressed as he is with the necessity of an early communication of his sentiments, no longer to defer making that communication to Mr. Perceval, who will consider it as being addressed equally to those of his colleagues who are acting with him.

'It would be unbecoming in His Majesty to attempt to disguise the impression of deep concern and regret with which he received the representation contained in the minute; or how much he laments that his attached servants should view the difficulties, under which they are placed by the state of affairs, the jealousy of contending parties, and the disunion of individuals recently acting together, in so serious a light as to be induced to suggest to His Majesty, as the only alternative which, in their opinion, affords a prospect of any arrangement for the establishment of a permanent Administration, that recourse should be had to a party, whose proceedings while they were in office, and whose conduct when their administration was dissolved, rendered them so justly obnoxious to His Majesty, and must cause their readmission to be so grating to his feelings; so impossible indeed consistently with his honour and the principles from which he has never swerved, unless means can be found to secure him against a renewal of attempts to which he can never submit, whatever may be the difficulties which may arise from his opposition to them.

'His Majesty has, however, too much confidence in the tried attachment of those who have proposed this step not to believe that it has been suggested by a conviction of its imperious necessity, or to imagine that it would have been entertained if, at this moment, they could satisfy themselves that, until it could be shown that this attempt had been fairly made, and that it had not experienced from the opposite party that spirit of liberality and patriotism which influences them in the proposal, and for which the situation of the country calls, they could have proceeded with safety, or with any prospect of success, in the consideration of any other arrangement. It is also this impression alone which can induce the King to enter into the consideration of a measure, in the execution of which he is apprehensive that obstacles may be experienced which will prove insurmountable.

'The King will, therefore, not withhold his consent to his servants entering into a negotiation with Lords Grey and Grenville, and to Mr. Perceval becoming, in conjunction with Lord Liverpool, the channel of such communication as shall be necessary upon this occasion; but His Majesty must decline all direct participation in such a negotiation. He must reserve to himself the responsibility of sanctioning or rejecting whatever may result from it, until his servants shall be enabled to submit for his consideration an arrangement which shall be positively established upon such principle as he can alone admit, and upon grounds which shall, from the share which they will possess in the Government, secure him from those attempts and encroachments which past experience has taught him to apprehend.

'If this basis cannot be positively established, His Majesty must then trust to their zeal and attachment for a support to which his conduct towards them has justly entitled him; he must appeal to them for the disinterested exertion of every effort, for the use of every possible expedient and resource which other quarters may furnish, to prevent his

being thrown into the hands and the power of the Opposition. His Majesty is himself ready and willing to meet every difficulty, without attempting to conceal from himself the extent of them. He will derive relief in such a crisis from the conscious rectitude of his intentions, and does not despair of finding support in the loyalty and attachment of his people, whose security and prosperity have been the constant object of his solicitude during a long and arduous reign; whose rights he has never knowingly infringed.

'The King has never shrunk from the sacrifice of personal comfort; he has never refused to submit to considerations seriously affecting his satisfaction, and his private feelings, or to forego the dictates of his own judgment and opinions, whenever the tranquillity of the state seemed to require sacrifices which have now become habitual to him, and which the same object will always obtain from him.

'But there are considerations which cannot be set aside, there are bounds which His Majesty cannot exceed, without the sacrifice of his honour, and of the honour and interests of his family, without a dereliction of the duty which he owes to his God and his country, without an abandonment of principles to which he has continued firmly attached through life, and which he is determined to maintain inviolate under any pressure of difficulty and embarrassment. If the King could possibly admit a change in these sentiments, he should consider himself as having forfeited every claim to the attachment and support of his people. He would be deprived of the comfort which he now derives from a pure conscience.

'The King desires that Mr. Perceval will communicate the contents of this paper to Lord Chatham, from whom His Majesty learnt in conversation, on Wednesday last, that he concurred generally in the sentiments conveyed in the minute of Cabinet, and in the opinion that it would be advisable to make the trial therein suggested.

'His Majesty also desires that Mr. Perceval will communicate this paper to the Duke of Portland, to whom His Majesty feels that he owes every mark of attention and regard. Nor can he ever forget the zealous, disinterested, and affectionate manner in which, at a period of great difficulty, he stepped forward from his retirement to his assistance, and took a share in the administration then forming under very doubtful prospects, regardless of his declining state of health, and of the effects upon it which might result from duties of great labour and anxiety. The King feels equally that, upon this late occasion, the Duke of Portland, in submitting his request to be allowed to retire from office, was not more influenced by the state of his health, than by an impression that that step might have the effect of counteracting some of the difficulties and embarrassments then apprehended; and although, owing to a singular and unforeseen circumstance, the Duke of Portland's proceeding produced a contrary effect, and has tended rather to hasten than to avert the crisis which had been dreaded, His Majesty will never lose sight of the honourable motive which guided him, and will never cease to entertain a just sense of the services which he has rendered to him, and of the warm attachment to his person of which he has given such manifold and repeated proofs.

'GEORGE R.'

Lord Eldon calls this long letter 'one of the finest compositions, and the most affecting, I ever saw or heard in my life.'[1]

Rose says of it:—'It is written with great energy and spirit, and upon the whole, if published, would do incalculable good, except as to the manner

[1] Twiss's 'Eldon,' ii. 98.

in which he speaks of the Opposition.'[1] Immediately on the receipt of it, Perceval wrote to both Lord Grey and Lord Grenville in, *mutatis mutandis*, exactly similar terms:—

'The Duke of Portland having signified to His Majesty his intention of retiring from His Majesty's service, in consequence of the state of his Grace's health, His Majesty has authorised Lord Liverpool, in conjunction with myself, to communicate with your lordship and Lord Grenville for the purpose of forming an extended and combined administration. I hope, therefore, that your lordship, in consequence of this communication, will come to town in order that as little time as possible may be lost in forwarding this important object, and that you will have the goodness to inform me of your arrival.

'I am also to acquaint your lordship that I have received His Majesty's commands to make a similar communication to Lord Grenville of His Majesty's pleasure.

'I think it proper to add, for your lordship's information, that Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Secretary Canning have also intimated their intention to resign their offices.'

Lord Grey, who the Cabinet had thought would prove the least reluctant of the two, replied on the 26th:—

'Had His Majesty been pleased to signify that he had any commands for me personally, I should not have lost a moment in showing my duty and obedience by a prompt attendance on his Royal pleasure.

'But, when it is proposed to me to communicate with His Majesty's present Ministers, for the purpose of forming a combined administration with them, I feel that I should be

[1] Rose, ii. 395.

wanting both in duty to His Majesty and in fairness to them, if I did not frankly and at once declare that such an union is, with respect to me, under the present circumstances impossible. This being the answer I find myself under the necessity of giving, my appearance in London would be of no advantage, and might possibly, at a moment like the present, be attended with inconvenience.'[1]

Lord Grenville, on the contrary, understood Perceval's letter 'as an official signification of His Majesty's pleasure, and lost no time in repairing to London, in humble obedience to His Majesty's commands.'[2] But, on his arrival in London, he found a letter from Lord Grey, and learned the decision at which the latter had arrived; and so, with a very singular inconsistency, he wrote again :—

'Having last night arrived here, in humble obedience to His Majesty's commands, I think it now my duty to lose no time in expressing to you the necessity, under which I feel myself, of declining the communication proposed in your letter; being satisfied that it could not, under the circumstances there mentioned, be productive of any public advantage.'[3]

It is clear, therefore, that Lord Grenville's sentiments must have totally changed between the time of his leaving his country seat in Cornwall and his final reply to Perceval's letter in London. For, as Rose shrewdly remarks, 'he would certainly not have taken the trouble of coming up two hundred

[1] Lord Grey and Perceval, 26th Sept. 1809.
[2] Lord Grenville and Perceval, 25th Sept. 1809.
[3] Ibid., 29th Sept.

and fifty miles merely to write from Camelford House, in Oxford Street, what he might just as well have written from Boconnoc.'

The difficulties of the situation had now become complete. The Cabinet had unanimously declared, on the 18th September, 'that the formation of a Government, without the assistance of some strength from the persons now opposed to them, is very difficult, if not impossible,' and the definite refusal of the two Lords made it obviously impracticable to obtain strength from that direction. Perceval laid the whole correspondence before the King, and, after expressing a strong opinion on the conduct of the two Lords, and his own determination to continue to resist the Catholic claims, added that he conceived 'that nothing remains to be done but for his servants to endeavour to secure assistance in other quarters.' 'His servants' had probably been anxiously considering the very same point in the repeated Cabinets which had been held at Perceval's residence during the few preceding days, and they had arrived at the very natural conclusion that, before any further overtures were possible, they must select some leader from among themselves to make them. This opinion they now expressed in a formal minute:—

'At the house of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

'Present:—The Lord Chancellor, the Lord Privy Seal, the Earl Bathurst, Earl Harrowby, the Chancellor of the

Exchequer, the Lord President, the Earl of Chatham, the Earl Liverpool, Lord Mulgrave.

'Your Majesty's confidential servants, having considered your Majesty's answer of this day to Mr. Perceval, humbly represent to your Majesty their opinion—that any further attempt, which could now be made for adding or securing strength to your Majesty's Government, would best be made by such person as your Majesty shall, under the present circumstances, appoint to be First Lord of the Treasury, and intrust with your Majesty's confidence to submit to your Majesty the necessary arrangement.

'Your Majesty's confidential servants being determined to make every exertion in their power, for the advantage of your Majesty's service, and for the support of the individual whom your Majesty may think proper to place at the head of your Government.'

Lord Eldon was intrusted with the task of laying this letter before the King, and was desired to add the unanimous opinion of the Cabinet that the new First Lord should be a member of the House of Commons. The Chancellor accordingly saw the King on the following day.

'I have had my audience,' he wrote to Perceval in the evening, 'delivered the Minute of the Cabinet, and stated what was to be delivered in parol. I shall not trouble you with a long letter; but I can very truly assure you that the whole was received exactly as you could wish, and as the rest of the King's servants could wish.

'The King will send to-morrow morning a written answer to the minute.'

The King's answer will conclude this chapter:—

'*Windsor Castle, Oct.* 4, 1809.

'The Chancellor having delivered to the King yesterday the Minute of the Cabinet Council held at the house of Mr. Perceval on the preceding day, and having also stated to His Majesty that his confidential servants were unanimous in their opinions that the individual, who shall succeed to the situation of First Lord of the Treasury, should, for the advantage of his service, be a member of the House of Commons, the King, after due consideration of what is submitted in the Minute, and of what the Chancellor has represented verbally, cannot hesitate in conveying to his confidential servants, through Mr. Perceval, his entire concurrence in their sentiments.

'Mr. Perceval's conduct has so fully confirmed the impression which the King had early received of his zeal and abilities, and of the honourable principles by which he is invariably actuated, that His Majesty cannot pause in his choice of the person to whom he should intrust a situation at all times most important, but particularly so under the present arduous circumstances; and His Majesty trusts that the warm and zealous attachment, which Mr. Perceval has manifested towards him upon former trying occasions, will now ensure to His Majesty the acceptance of an office in which he may rest assured that he will possess His Majesty's entire confidence.

'Mr. Perceval will observe that, situated as he now is, he will not step into that office as a new person, that he rises to it by no unusual or unprecedented progression, that the duties of the two offices are closely connected, and that his appointment will not even require that he should vacate his seat in Parliament.

'The King has seen with no small degree of satisfaction in the conduct of his confidential servants, their determination to make every exertion in their power for the advantage of his service, and in support of the course which His Majesty follows from a thorough conviction that it is correct and

such as can alone be reconciled to what he owes to himself and to the country.

'His Majesty has, he trusts, given sufficient proof that, in his adherence to that course, he has not been swayed by prejudice, or even by the recollection of past occurrences, grating to his feelings and naturally calculated to produce strong and lasting impressions; but that he has been guided solely by principles which, if he could abandon, he could also forget that he is the guardian of a free constitution.

'The King must repeat that he does not attempt to conceal from himself the difficulties which must be encountered, but he assures his confidential servants that he will not shrink from any which his duty bids him to encounter, and that they shall never fail to experience from him the countenance and encouragement, the firm and declared support, to which they are entitled from their attachment and devotion to a just cause which, with the powerful aid of Providence, he trusts he shall be able to maintain. They will find him equally disposed to concur in such measures as they shall recommend for adding or securing strength to his Government.

'The King has, in a former letter to Mr. Perceval, expressed his reliance upon the attachment and loyalty of his people; and it is natural that he should at this moment advert to the importance of strengthening or securing those feelings, by such means as can with propriety be adopted towards convincing the country at large that His Majesty's proceedings have been directed with a view to its peace and tranquillity; and that he has not hesitated to sacrifice his personal feelings to the object of reconciling those political differences which deprive it of the advantage of a more extensive combination of its abilities.'

'The King is confident that at least no pains will be spared by his confidential servants to counteract the effect which might result from the misrepresentation of the cir-

cumstances which have taken place. A full exposure of which, if it were possible, would but serve His Majesty's cause and future interests. He trusts that the country would then admit how weak is the ground on which Lord Grenville maintains principles assumed in opposition to a leading feature of that constitution which, as a peer and a servant of the public, it was his duty to support, when compared with those on which His Majesty adheres to principles which he feels that he is bound to consider as no less sacred than he does every right which is secured to his people by the conditions under which he succeeded to the throne.

'G. R.'

CHAPTER II.

THE FORMATION OF PERCEVAL'S GOVERNMENT.

1809.

Difficulty of forming a Cabinet—Dundas—Lord Sidmouth and Lord Wellesley — Extraordinary Proceedings of Canning — The Foreign Office offered to Lord Wellesley—Lord Wellesley's Reply — Political Influence of Lord Sidmouth and his Followers — Hopes and Fears of the Ministry —Bragge-Bathurst, and Vansittart — Robert Milnes and Lord Palmerston — Palmerston Secretary-at-War — George Rose — A Lecture on Finance — Chancellorship of the Exchequer a-begging — The Cabinet.

THE definite refusal, both of Lord Grey and Lord Grenville, to have anything to do with the new Ministry, made it a matter of extreme difficulty to fill up the vacant situations in the Cabinet. Four vacancies had to be supplied—the Duke of Portland's, as First Lord of the Treasury; Canning's, at the Foreign Office; Castlereagh's, at the Colonial and War Office; Lord G. Leveson-Gower's, Canning's friend, as Secretary at War. Perceval had himself, of course, taken the Duke's place; but his own was in consequence vacant, and he was extremely reluctant to retain the two offices in his own hands. Dundas, it was at first hoped, would take the Colonial Office; but Lord Melville's opposition ulti-

mately defeated this arrangement. It seemed unlikely, at the end of September, that Dundas would obtain his father's permission to accept any office at all.

There were then four vacancies to be filled. There were two men to whom the thoughts of the Cabinet naturally turned—Lord Sidmouth and Lord Wellesley. Lord Wellesley had perhaps a higher reputation for administrative ability than any other man in the kingdom; he had been designed to replace Castlereagh at the Colonial Office; he had proceeded on his mission to Spain with a partial knowledge of the probability of his recall for that purpose; and he had, a few weeks before, been certainly favourable to the Duke of Portland's Government. On the other hand, Lord Wellesley was closely connected with Canning, and it seemed probable that a contingency, which was driving the latter from office, would indispose his Lordship to accept place. Wellesley Pole, the new Secretary for Ireland, Lord Wellesley's brother, thought otherwise; he was satisfied that his brother would come forward in defence of the King. The Cabinet hardly dared to hope, but they determined that the attempt should be made.

The decision had hardly been formed when the Cabinet discovered that Canning had ventured on an extraordinary proceeding, which had nearly exposed the Ministry to the most serious embarrassment. Lord Wellesley, when he had set out for

Spain, had left in Canning's hands a letter desiring his recall, in the event of Canning's retirement from the Ministry. On the 2nd October, Canning was sufficiently recovered from his duel with Castlereagh to have an audience with the King, and he then submitted to His Majesty Lord Wellesley's resignation, and obtained permission to appoint Mr. Frere as Lord Wellesley's successor. The King seems to have imagined that the business had been agreed to in the ordinary way, and made no objection to it. Fortunately, however, he mentioned it to Perceval at a subsequent audience, and Perceval was just in time to stop the ship, which was carrying out Canning's despatch, till it could be accompanied with an explanatory letter from Wellesley Pole.[1] A few days afterwards, on the 5th October, Perceval sent Mr. Sydenham, a confidential friend of Lord Wellesley's, to Spain with a letter in which he offered his Lordship the Foreign Office, the duties of which Lord Bathurst had agreed to temporarily undertake till Lord Wellesley's reply could be received. Mr. Sydenham was entrusted with copies of the entire correspondence which had passed between Perceval and Canning. In these days, even during a war with France, a messenger would have easily passed from London to Seville in a week's time, and Lord Wellesley would have telegraphed back the answer to the new Minister in twenty-four hours more. In those days, it took Sydenham more than three weeks

[1] Rose, ii. 399.

to reach Seville! It gives one another curious insight into the history of those times to find that Lord Wellesley thought it necessary to send his reply in duplicate. One copy of it was forwarded by H.M.S. 'Pickle;' the duplicate was probably returned by Sydenham himself.

'Mr. Sydenham,' he writes, 'having arrived at this place on the 27th instant, in the evening, and delivered to me your obliging letter of the 5th, together with the papers to which it refers; I return you many thanks for your very kind attention in employing Mr. Sydenham as the channel of communication on this interesting and important occasion. The papers, which he has fully explained to me, by reference to every circumstance of the late extraordinary events in England, combined with such information as had already reached me, leave no doubt in my mind in regard to the principles both of public and private duty, which should govern my conduct in the present crisis, and in the actual situation of His Majesty's service.

'I therefore accept without hesitation the office of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; and I shall return to England, with all practicable expedition, for the purpose of discharging the duties of that important station with the zeal and attention which His Majesty may justly claim from a person so deeply indebted to His Majesty's gracious favour, and which he may expect from the whole tenor of my public life and services.

'I am particularly flattered by His Majesty's indulgent consideration, and the kindness which you and my friends in office have manifested by the temporary appointment of a person whom I value so highly and affectionately as Lord Bathurst. This arrangement is the strongest proof which could be afforded of His Majesty's condescending goodness, as well as of the confidence and good-will of those with whom I am to act in His Majesty's service.

'You will probably have known from my brother William, that, as early as the 7th of this month, my sentiments upon the whole course of the recent transactions in England were completely fixed; and you may rest assured that I shall enter His Majesty's councils with a firm determination to exert every effort within my power for the maintenance of His Majesty's Government on the basis which he has been pleased to approve, and for the despatch of the public business and the prosperity of the public interests in the hands to which he has been pleased to commit them.

'It will be peculiarly satisfactory to me to have this trust with persons, to many of whom I have been closely united in friendship and affection for the greater part of my life, and for all of whom I entertain a high respect and esteem.'[1]

With this letter came another, also in duplicate, expressing his Lordship's great anxiety 'that Sir John Anstruther should form a part of the new arrangement, if he should be desirous, as I trust he will be, of supporting the King on the present occasion.'

Before Lord Wellesley's answer had been received, Perceval had been engaged in fresh negotiations. The moment Lords Grey and Grenville had definitely declined to join the new Ministry, Perceval's attention had naturally been directed to the group of men who followed Lord Sidmouth's fortunes. Few politicians ever succeeded in attaining so peculiar a position as that which Lord Sidmouth occupied after the fall of his own Administration. His political following was small, but it was sufficient constantly

[1] Perceval Papers.

to turn the scale. No Minister was safe without Lord Sidmouth's support. All parties in turn paid court to his Lordship. Pitt, in the autumn of 1804, temporarily strengthened his tottering Administration by promoting Addington to the Cabinet and a peerage; Lord Melville, in 1805, owed his impeachment to the circumstance that Sidmouth, in his heart, was against him. Fox, in 1806, sought and obtained his Lordship's aid. The fall of the Talents' Administration, in 1807, was precipitated by this nobleman's treachery. The friend and foe of each party in turn, it was natural that Perceval should have applied to his Lordship. Lord Sidmouth had introduced him to office; Lord Sidmouth, in 1804, had found in Perceval his chief defender; Lord Sidmouth, in 1807, had applied to Perceval to shelter himself from the policy of his own colleagues.

But there was a danger as well as an advantage in Lord Sidmouth's help. The chief fear for the new Ministry was obviously the junction of Canning with the Opposition. Their chief hope lay in Canning's neutrality. But Lord Sidmouth to Canning was like the traditional red rag to the bull. The latter had never forgiven the former his long exclusion from office. Was it not possible then, if Lord Sidmouth had a seat in the cabinet, that Canning would be driven into opposition? Would it not be better to dispense with Lord Sidmouth's assistance than to convert Canning into an open enemy?

Such certainly was Perceval's opinion. But it

occurred to him that it was possible that the advantages which Lord Sidmouth's support would secure might be obtained without the disadvantages which his presence in the cabinet would occasion. Among the more useful of the politicians who were habitually associated with Lord Sidmouth, were Bragge-Bathurst and Vansittart. Perceval asked Lord Chatham to find out for him whether Lord Sidmouth would sanction their joining the Ministry without succeeding to office himself. The answer was unfavourable. But Perceval was never disconcerted by a difficulty; and, with the full approval of the King, he wrote to Lord Sidmouth on the 7th October, and laid the whole case before him. His Lordship was ill in bed, when the letter came, with fever and erysipelas; and the discomfort and pain which he was suffering possibly soured the reply which he dictated to his wife.

'I am obliged,' he wrote, 'to make use of Lady Sidmouth's hand, in answering your letter, which I have thought it due to you and Mr. Bathurst to send to him by this day's post. He, I am sure, will receive as much pleasure as has been afforded to me by the openness and candour with which it has been written; but I am equally sure that, if it were possible for me to attempt to give effect to the purpose of it, my efforts would be ineffectual. Under no possible circumstances would he accede to such a proposition; but, under the present, even if the difficulties which you have so fairly acknowledged did not exist, I am persuaded he would concur with me in declining office, as it is not yet certain that such an arrangement as the exigency calls for is necessarily unattainable. I agree with you in thinking that the ambiguous expressions in Lord Grenville's

second letter to you are by no means innoxious; they, however, admit of explanation; and the mischief, of which they are capable, by operating upon the hopes of some and the fears of others, would not, if a satisfactory explanation should take place, be a reason for producing the still greater mischief of foregoing the assistance and support of men of great talents, influence, and authority at such a crisis. . . .

'P.S. With respect to your proposal to Vansittart, I can only say that I wish to leave it to his own decision.'

Lord Sidmouth, it was evident, was still hoping for Lord Grenville. His letter, it may be imagined, excited considerable consternation.

'The passages in Lord Sidmouth's letter, which I have scored under in pencil,' wrote Lord Eldon, 'satisfy me that you will have no chance with any of his connexions till some further treaty has been opened with the Lords lately treated with; and, as I do not see how that can be, and with some odd notions of mine picked up from experience, I conclude that Lord S. will be with you, or against you, as it may seem most advisable when the time for acting comes.[1] . . . . .

'And now, my dear Sir, whether we are to be beaten to

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[1] Lord Eldon's shrewd anticipation was practically verified. Lord Sidmouth, after negotiating ineffectually with Lord Grenville, turned towards Perceval. 'I am convinced,' he wrote to Bragge-Bathurst on the 1st December, 'that our bias should be to support the measures of the present Administration, which cannot now be considered so weak as to justify our concurring on that ground only, and before they are tried, in any parliamentary proceeding for their removal. The language I should recommend would be that we were not hostile to Government, and that *our conduct would depend upon their measures*, which we hoped would be such as to enable us to support them.' ('Life of Lord Sidmouth, iii. 17.) How thoroughly Lord Eldon understood his old leader!

dust and ashes, or, what is ten times worse, to be humiliated and disgraced (I mean as to myself after twenty-six years' consistency), by finally coalescing, as Lord S. seems plainly to point to, with men of great *talents*, influence, and authority at this crisis, I will stand and fall with my old master, and you, whom I believe to be his most attached servant. Heaven defend me! After what I have heard Sidmouth say of Grenville and of Grey, to read him, stating, "the greater mischief of foregoing the assistance of their great *talents*, influence, and authority," obliges me to believe that he has either altogether altered his opinions, or that he was laughing at me when he stated those which I once thought were his opinions.' . . . .

'His Majesty,' wrote the King on the 10th, much more concisely, but even more severely, 'is sorry to perceive that Lord Sidmouth is more influenced by private feelings than by his concern for the welfare and the interests of the public cause.'

Bathurst was clearly unattainable; but the postscript in Lord Sidmouth's letter seemed to hold out a slight hope that Vansittart's services might be obtained. Vansittart was staying at Torquay for the benefit of his wife's health; and there Perceval wrote to him on the 7th October. Vansittart replied on the 9th that he had written to consult Lord Sidmouth; and this reply must have convinced Perceval that he had no chance of success in that quarter. Still, however, it was necessary to wait. Perceval had followed up his letter by sending his own private secretary, Herries, a personal friend of Vansittart's, to Torquay, and authorising him to offer the latter specifically the Chancellorship of the

Exchequer. The proposal was a brilliant one. A much more brilliant one, thought old George Rose, than Vansittart had a right to expect;[1] and Vansittart was evidently pleased at the offer of 'the highly honourable situation.' But he had placed himself in Lord Sidmouth's hands, and, very creditably, refused to desert his old friend and declined the prize.

The refusal of Vansittart removed every prospect of obtaining active help from the Sidmouth connexion. It also left free the office of Chancellor of Exchequer. Pitt, in both his Ministries, had held the two offices of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer: Addington had followed Pitt's example. Perceval, the first commoner after Pitt who had been Prime Minister, was anxious to obtain for himself the additional leisure which their separation would afford him. Vansittart's refusal made it necessary for him to look elsewhere; and he turned to two younger men, Robert Milnes and Lord Palmerston. Milnes was a young man of very great promise. His power of speech had gained him the nickname of 'Orator' Milnes; and he had attached himself with some warmth to the side of Canning. Lord Palmerston was also a young member. He had been a candidate for the University while he was yet an undergraduate; his talents and industry had attracted general attention. His maiden speech had been received with considerable

[1] Rose, ii. 407.

applause; and calm observers had already admired 'the talents and excellent understanding, as well as the many other good qualities and accomplishments, of this very fine young man."[1]

Perceval probably preferred Milnes to Palmerston. Milnes was the more brilliant speaker, and the Ministry was in terrible need of aid in debate. Milnes, moreover, was attached to Canning, and it was Perceval's obvious policy to heal as far as possible the breach between Canning's followers and himself. Perceval wrote to Milnes on the 14th October, and begged him to come to town. On the same day, he seems to have written to Palmerston at Broadlands, and made a similar request. Palmerston arrived on the 16th, and was staggered to receive a definite offer of the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. Palmerston hesitated; and Perceval then told him that Milnes was the only other person he had thought of for the situation since Vansittart's refusal of it. Palmerston still hesitated, and Perceval then made two other proposals. The first that Palmerston should take a Lordship of the Treasury and be subsequently promoted to the Chancellorship, if he found himself equal to the post. The second that he should take the office of Secretary at War, in the event of Milnes refusing that place, which was intended for him. Two days later Palmerston,

[1] The phrase is Plumer Ward's, i. 250. Surely such a compliment, paid at such a time, might have been quoted by Lord Dalling in his interesting 'Life of Lord Palmerston.'

with rare prudence, definitely refused the Chancellorship, but expressed his readiness to take the Secretaryship-at-War. Perceval 'told me very frankly that it depended upon certain other arrangements whether he should be able to give me the office; that conceiving that Milnes would be a very great acquisition to Government, if the bias he had in favour of Canning did not prevent him from joining us, . . . he meant to offer him the Chancellorship of the Exchequer; but that it was possible Milnes might decline so ostensible a post, and that then, rather than run the risk of losing him, he wished to offer him the War Office.' Milnes arrived a few days afterwards; 'and, having had a long conversation with Perceval, and also with Canning, determined, upon hearing both sides, to heartily support Perceval, but decline office altogether.' Palmerston was then made Secretary at War.[1] The Chancellorship of the Exchequer was still vacant.

Perceval now bethought him of old George Rose. Rose was the most respectable of Tories; but he

[1] This was late in October. On the 19th of the previous August Whishaw wrote a long letter to Brougham, which the latter inserts in his Autobiography. In it he says, 'We had also, at dinner (at Holland House) the new Secretary at War (Lord Palmerston), who was silent and reserved, as became a Cabinet Minister and a man of fashion' (i. 252). Either Whishaw was something more than a prophet, or Lord Brougham must in later years have touched up his correspondent's letter; for Lord Palmerston was not Secretary at War for more than two months, and he was not a Cabinet Minister for more than twenty years afterwards.

was the weakest of speakers. His knowledge of Parliamentary tactics and finance would have made him useful in the closet; but his utter incapacity as a speaker would have rendered him useless in debate. It was no fault of his that he was old; old in years, older still from constant ill-health; it was equally no fault of his that he was unpopular; but his unpopularity was a serious additional disqualification. '*Non tali auxilio*,' wrote Plumer Ward. It may be taken as an indication of the extreme straits to which Perceval had been driven that he should have offered Rose such an office.

George Rose took a day to make up his mind, and then declined the offer. He spent the early part of the following morning in drawing up a paper on finance. Strolling afterwards into Westminster Abbey, he heard a sermon from the Dean on Taxation. The Dean seems to have taken a more cheerful view of the state of things than Rose; but 'the whimsical coincidence' induced the latter to carry his views straight to Perceval. In lieu of a Chancellor the sorely worked minister had a lecture on finance!

Perceval, however, still did not despair of separating the Chancellorship of the Exchequer from his own office at the head of the Treasury. After Rose's refusal, he offered the place to Charles Long, and it was refused for the fifth time! Perceval was now compelled to abandon his intention, and undertake the two offices himself; but he determined that

the public should at any rate be the better for his decision, and declined the salary of the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. 'Mr. Rose,' so he wrote to the King on the 24th October, 'declines accepting the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer; as also does Mr. Long. Mr. Perceval therefore conceives that he must abandon all idea of prevailing upon anyone at present to accept that office; but must proceed to fill up the vacant commission at the Treasury without parting with that office himself. Mr. Perceval will, however, keep in his view that arrangement as one which he conceives would be of great convenience to your Majesty's service, and will revert to it if any opportunity should offer itself. In the meantime Mr. Perceval will decline receiving the salary of it.'

Perceval's decision, to retain the Chancellorship of the Exchequer himself, completed the Cabinet. The Duke of Portland's place he occupied himself; and the Duke was prevailed upon to continue in the Cabinet without office; Lord Wellesley had succeeded Canning; Lord Palmerston—though he refused the Cabinet—had succeeded Lord Grenville Leveson Gower. Lord Liverpool had been transferred from the Home Office to the Colonial Office, in succession to Lord Castlereagh; and Richard Ryder, the Judge Advocate-General, a younger brother of Lord Harrowby, accepted the seals of the Home Office, in succession to Lord Liverpool.

The places outside the Cabinet were more easily

filled. Lord Palmerston, we have already seen, became Secretary at War; Lord Melville permitted Dundas to become President of the Board of Control. Richard Wharton, the Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, was appointed Secretary to the Treasury in succession to Huskisson. Charles Arbuthnot replaced Henry Wellesley —who is better known as Lord Cowley, and who had succeeded his brother in Spain—in the other Secretaryship. Manners Sutton, the Archbishop's son, was appointed on Ryder's promotion to the lucrative office of Judge Advocate-General.

One question, however, still remained for consideration. The changes in the Ministry necessitated many new elections; but there was some doubt whether the seat of the Prime Minister was vacant or not. Perceval had, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, been a Commissioner of the Treasury. As First Lord, he was technically nothing more than a Commissioner of the Treasury still. Was he compelled, under such circumstances, to re-submit himself to his constituents?

The King, from the first, had characteristically made up his mind that the seat was not vacated. 'Mr. Perceval will observe,' he had written, 'that, situated as he now is, he will not step into that office as a new person, that he rises to it by no unusual or unprecedented progression, that the duties of the two offices are closely connected, *and that his appointment will not even require that he*

should vacate his seat in Parliament.[1] Perceval was more doubtful on the point; Lord Redesdale more doubtful still. 'Reflecting,' wrote the latter on the 22nd November, 'upon all which you have communicated to me, I think, if the question were to be determined upon principle, the *safer* opinion would be that your seat was vacated, and the House ought to adopt that opinion; but, considering the question with reference to practice, it may be said that practice has given an interpretation to the Act which may control its apparent import, as practice has been admitted to control the apparent import (if my recollection is just) in other instances. I do not recollect the particular instances to which I allude; but I remember that, when Speaker, having occasion to look into the practice, I did think that the House had, in some cases, determined that the seat was not vacated under circumstances which I thought were within the apparent import of the Act. I think, however, that the question still remains so far doubtful that it will be most prudent to submit it to the House. You do not mention whether you have talked to the Chancellor on the subject. He is certainly given to doubt; but I think, for many reasons, you ought to mention it to him.'

Soon after the receipt of this letter, Perceval naturally turned for advice to the three chief authorities, the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Chancellor, and his own Law Officers. 'The Solicitor-

[1] Vide ante, p. 35.

General and I,' wrote Sir V. Gibbs, 'have considered the statement which you sent to me, and which I now return, together with the precedents referred to, and we agree in thinking, upon the authority of those precedents, that your seat is not vacated by your succeeding to the office of First Lord of the Treasury.' 'I think,' wrote Lord Eldon on the 25th December, 'that Mr. P.'s seat is not void by any acceptance of any office of profit since his election. . . . The Act has not said that, if the King gives an increase of profit to a person already holding an office of profit, his seat shall be void, but only that if any person accepts an office of profit his seat shall be void.' 'I think with you,' wrote the Speaker, 'that, under the Statute of Anne, there must be the concurrence of *office and profit conjointly* in the *new* grant which is to vacate a seat; to reaccept the same office under a new commission has never in practice been held to vacate a seat; and *the acceptance of a new annexation of profit to an office already in possession* has been considered equally free from the same consequences.'

The greatest authorities, then, the Speaker, the Chancellor, and the Law Officers, all concurred in thinking that Perceval's acceptance of the higher office had not vacated his seat. Their opinion was naturally followed. Perceval did not vacate his seat for Northampton; and the decision, that it was not vacated, was accepted without comment, and never

questioned by the Opposition in the House of Commons.

More than half a century after this question had been thus raised, a similar circumstance drew attention to the Constitutional point involved in it. Perceval had been Chancellor of the Exchequer, and had accepted the office of First Lord of the Treasury; Mr. Gladstone, on the contrary, was First Lord of the Treasury, and accepted the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Both were Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, and as such held offices of profit under the Crown. Lord Eldon evidently thought that Perceval's promotion from the second to the first place in the Commission, though attended with 'an increase of profit,' did not vacate his seat. The Speaker still more plainly concluded that the 'acceptance of a new annexation of profit to an office already in possession' was free from this consequence. In the opinion, therefore, both of Lord Eldon and the Speaker, the Commissionership of the Treasury, and not the First Lordship or the Chancellorship, was the place of profit within the meaning of the law. It would follow from this reasoning that the acceptance of the Chancellorship by Mr. Gladstone would no more vacate his seat than Perceval's was vacated by the acceptance of the First Lordship of the Treasury.

CHAPTER III.

THE SESSION OF 1810.

1810.

Completion of Negotiations—The New Ministry—Palmerston and Peel—The King and the Ministry—The Battle of Talavera—Meeting of Parliament—Debate on the Address—Disinterestedness of Perceval—Inquiry into the Walcheren Expedition—Lord Chatham's Report—Whitbread's Victory in the House of Commons—Resignation of Lord Chatham—Unusual Conflict in Parliament—Case of Gale Jones—Sir Francis Burdett's Address to his Constituents—His Committal to the Tower—London in a State of Siege—Sir F. Burdett's Actions against the Speaker and Serjeant-at-Law—Arbitrary Policy of the Speaker—Budget of the Year—Prosperity of the Country—Sinecures—Parliamentary Reform—Catholic Emancipation.

THE protracted negotiations were at last concluded. The new Ministry was complete. It was time to consider what chances a Government, so constituted, had of surviving a single parliamentary campaign. 'To be sure Mr. Perceval's zeal and goodness,' as the Dean of Christ Church put it to the Speaker, 'were unbounded;'[1] but their strength was insufficient. They must give way, and probably before the meeting of Parliament. 'Ministers weak, and uncertain of support,' wrote the Speaker himself; 'Opposition, eager and confident.'[2]

[1] Colchester, ii. 214. [2] Ibid. 225.

That the Ministry was weak must have been obvious both to friend and foe. During the previous session the Portland administration had made only a sorry exhibition. Perceval, Fremantle complained, had lost all authority with his party. The House of Commons had become utterly disorganised, without a leader, without a policy; and the entire year had been wasted with attacks on various officers—a Commander-in-Chief, a Secretary of State, a Chancellor of the Exchequer. There was no likelihood at the beginning of 1810 that Perceval alone would succeed where Perceval and Canning together had failed. Though the former was pre-eminently the first debater in the House, the latter was his equal, if not his superior, in eloquence. Perceval, Castlereagh, and Canning, had, as members of the same Cabinet, presented a front which no Opposition could despise. But Perceval had now to contend against the Opposition alone. Lord H. Petty, it is true, had been moved to the House of Lords, just as Lord Grey had been moved the year before; but Ponsonby, the leader of the Opposition, Sheridan, Tierney, the most efficient man on that side of the House, Windham, Whitbread, Burdett, and a host of others, were still opposed to the minister, who moreover was exposed to flank attacks from Canning and his personal followers, and was backed by only the remnant of a divided party.

For, much as the Portland administration had lost in the House of Commons by the retirement of Canning

and Castlereagh from the Cabinet, and of Huskisson and Sturges Bourne from the Ministry, it had been found impossible to supply these defects with fresh blood. The one prominent accession of strength which Perceval had gained was the acquisition of Lord Wellesley. But Lord Wellesley had no personal following whatever, and his voice could only be raised in the House of Lords where the Ministry was already sufficiently strong. It was in the House of Commons where the battle had evidently to be fought. The promotion of Lord Harrowby's brother, R. Ryder, to the Cabinet, can hardly be said to have increased the debating power of the Ministry. Two younger men were indeed capable, if they had been willing, of rendering more effectual assistance. But the qualities, which ultimately made Sir Robert Peel the greatest minister of the nineteenth century, were only partially developed in 1810, when he made his maiden speech.[1] Constitutional diffidence condemned Lord Palmerston to habitual silence.

Perceval then was the only debater of any eminence on the Treasury Bench. 'They say,' wrote

[1] Perceval requested Sir Robert (then Mr.) Peel to second the Address at the opening of the session. Mr. Peel's father (the first Sir Robert) wrote to thank the Minister for doing so; and the following passage in his letter is worth preserving: 'If he' (his son) 'has the good fortune to be honoured with your confidence, I flatter myself he will be found deserving of the trust reposed in him. He possesses capacity, industry, and virtuous habits; and, under the guidance of a judicious and well-informed friend, he may become a useful member of society.'

Brougham to Lord Grey, 'that only Perceval will be in Parliament at the opening; but that is saying only their whole strength will be there."[1] 'Our party is certainly ill off for second-rates,' wrote Lord Palmerston to Lord Malmesbury. 'Ill off for second-rates,' and with no first-rate man to assist him, it is wonderful that Perceval should have ventured to have met Parliament at all. George Rose, who had made parliamentary tactics the study of his life, doubted his prudence in attempting to form a Government;[2] and even Perceval would himself, in all probability, have recoiled from the task, if it had not been from a feeling of chivalrous devotion to the old King.

It is not very easy for the present generation to realise the feelings which George III. inspired. Loyal as we are to Her Majesty, no one dreams that there is anything disloyal in replacing Mr. Disraeli with Mr. Gladstone, or Lord Aberdeen with Lord Palmerston. The Queen is placed above the strife of political warfare; and though she may have, and no doubt has, her political preferences, she has so true a sense of her duties as a constitutional sovereign that she has never suffered herself to betray them. But with George III. this was widely different. He was the last King of England who ever attempted personal government in this country. He had begun his long reign with the preconceived opinion that the choice of a Ministry ought to rest with the crown, and, notwithstanding the

[1] Brougham's 'Autobiography,' i. 487. [2] Diary, ii. 396.

lamentable results to which this opinion had contributed, he had not reconciled himself to the conclusion that the task of making and unmaking ministers rested with Parliament alone. In 1760 his personal preference for Bute drove Lord Chatham from his counsels, and elevated an untried Scotch nobleman to the highest position which an Englishman can fill. In 1804 his personal dislike of Fox induced Pitt to form his second Ministry without his great rival. In 1807 his own influence had broken up the 'Talents Administration.' He thought that there was nothing unreasonable in 1809 in urging Perceval and Lord Eldon, whom he liked, to stand between him and Lords Grey and Grenville, whom he distrusted.

That the King should have held such opinions is perhaps not extraordinary. The extraordinary thing is that throughout his reign he should have inspired so many other persons with them. Pitt was more conscious than any other Englishman of the power of the House of Commons; yet Pitt committed the great blunder of his life, and placed himself at the head of a hopelessly weak Ministry to humour his Sovereign. 'To ease the King's mind,' Lord Grey and Lord Grenville were themselves willing in 1809 to abandon the Catholics, for whose sake they had resigned in 1807; and nearly every public man seems to have been actuated by a similar feeling of chivalrous loyalty to their old King.

The feeling was no doubt partly promoted by other circumstances. In the autumn of 1809 George III.

completed the fiftieth year of his reign, and the most inveterate Whig might have been pardoned for desiring that his sovereign's jubilee should be as free from political anxiety as possible. The distressing malady with which the King was occasionally afflicted increased the fervour of his subjects' attachment. There were certain questions on which the King felt so strongly that his reason gave way when he approached them. Was it wonderful that his people should desire that his few remaining years should pass in peace, and that the questions which he disliked should be postponed till his long and glorious reign was over? We, in our own time, have seen the subject of parliamentary reform deferred out of respect to a veteran statesman. Can we be surprised that the feelings, which Lord Palmerston kindled during the last few years of his life, should have been excited by an old and popular sovereign?

No Englishman had acquired, more strongly than Perceval, the feeling of personal devotion to the old King. He had already succeeded in imbuing his followers with the same kind of attachment to himself that they all already felt towards their sovereign. 'We must fix this honest little fellow firmly on his seat, for it is a struggle of principle, on the one hand, against trimming and political intrigue on the other.'[1] Such was the remark of Milnes, who had refused office, to Palmerston, who had accepted it. But loyalty to the monarch, and admiration of the

[1] Life of Palmerston.

leader, were in themselves insufficient. Parliament had to be faced, and the questions, which the meeting of Parliament would involve, answered. Two subjects, both of the utmost importance, had obviously to be encountered; either of them, it seemed possible, might lead directly to the overthrow of the Ministry. Sir A. Wellesley's expedition to the Peninsula had led to the victory at Talavera; but the battle had been attended with no results. Wellesley had retreated after his triumph, and was shut up in the impregnable position which he had made for himself in Portugal. The Ministry had rewarded the general with a pension; but the Opposition declared that neither the one nor the other was deserved; and that the Ministry, which had conferred them, must fall with the general they had supported. If such was the opinion which the Opposition entertained of our victories, it is easy to imagine what they thought of our defeats. The fatal expedition to the Scheldt deserved Parliamentary censure. If that censure was in the main directed against Lord Castlereagh, who had originated the campaign, it fell also with crushing weight on the commander, Lord Chatham. Lord Castlereagh had retired from the Ministry; but Lord Chatham was still a member of the Cabinet.

Parliament met on the 23rd January. The author of the 'Pictorial History' tells us that, 'it had cost Ministers no small pains to draw up the Speech, for there were few subjects for congratulation.' The little that could be urged in

favour of the disastrous expedition to Walcheren was inserted, and much was made of Lord Wellington's glorious victory at Talavera. Amendments were moved to the Address in both Houses. In the Lords, the Government, as might have been anticipated, had a considerable majority—144 votes to 92. In the Commons, a similar struggle ensued. The Address was moved by Lord Bernard, and seconded by Peel; and the Opposition put up Lord Gower to propose an amendment regretting 'the accumulated failures and disasters of the last campaign, the unavailing waste of our national resources, and the loss of so many thousands of our brave troops, whose distinguished and heroic valour has been unprofitably sacrificed in enterprises, productive, not of advantage, but of lasting injury to their country;' and promising 'to institute, without delay, such rigorous and effectual inquiries and proceedings as duty compels us to adopt in a case where our country has been subjected to unexampled calamity and disgrace.' The amendment was seconded by Ward, afterwards Lord Dudley, and produced a long debate, in the course of which Whitbread criticised with much severity the whole conduct of the Portland Administration, and the formation of the new Ministry. Perceval replied at some length. A division ensued; the Government had a majority of 263 votes to 167:[1]

'Our numbers last night,' Perceval wrote to Lord Wel-

[1] Hansard, xv. 38-105.

lesley, 'were only 264 (*sic*) to 167; but this majority included the Sidmouths, the Castlereaghs, the Cannings, the Wilberforces, and possibly some others, who would have voted for a more temperate amendment, seeking only for inquiry, and not prejudging it by a criminatory introduction.'

The result proved the correctness of this view. At the conclusion of the debate, Lord Porchester gave notice of his intention to move for the appointment of a committee of inquiry into the policy and conduct of the late expedition to the Scheldt; and three days afterwards made the motion. The Ministry met it with the previous question. The papers relating to the expedition, they contended, would be ready for presentation to Parliament in the following week. Why not wait till they were before the House, to ascertain whether an inquiry was necessary or not? Canning supported the Government in this view; but, notwithstanding his support, Lord Porchester succeeded in carrying his motion, in a full House, by a small majority—195 votes to 186.[1] In the very first week of the Session, the new Ministry had suffered a serious reverse. Its consequences were immediately perceptible. The House had satisfied itself of its own power, and lost no opportunity of impressing its superiority on the Minister. In previous sessions Perceval had always taken the nomination of the Finance Committee into his own hands. Lord H. Petty had placed on it a majority of his own friends

[1] Hansard, xv. 208.

in 1806; and Perceval had followed his predecessor's example in 1807, 1808, and 1809. The House had murmured against the Minister, but had submitted to his decision. Two days after the Walcheren division Bankes moved for the reappointment of the Finance Committee, and concluded his motion by reading a list of the gentlemen whom he intended to place upon it. It was in vain that Perceval protested against the composition of the Committee, 'so different from that of preceding years;' it was in vain that the Solicitor-General argued that the right of nomination should rest with the Minister; the House turned a deaf ear to protest and argument, and in three successive divisions defeated the Ministry by 9, 5, and 13 votes.[1]

The Session was only a week old, yet the Ministry had sustained four serious reverses. Its best friends were considering the possibility of going on. One of its most conspicuous members, Lord Wellesley, had made up his mind that the task was impracticable, and had concluded that the reins of Government were on the eve of falling into his own hands. The disappointment, which he felt at the contrary result, is said by a high authority to have been the first cause of the rupture which ultimately took place between Perceval and his Lordship.[2]

It was while these debates were going on that an event occurred which, of no general importance

[1] Hansard, xv. 265.

[2] Sir J. C. Lewis's Administration, 322.

in itself, deeply affected the subject of this biography. William Eden, Lord Auckland's son, was found drowned in the Thames. Eden was one of the tellers of the Exchequer; the place was worth 2700*l.* a-year; it involved no duties; it was in the gift of the Minister; it could be held either by the Minister himself or any one of his family. Singularly enough Pitt, twenty-six years before, had been subjected to a similar temptation. Soon after the formation of his first Ministry, when it was struggling against a united majority, and its fall seemed in consequence to be imminent, a rich sinecure, the Clerkship of the Pells, had become vacant. The political world immediately concluded that the great Minister would give the place to himself, and make in this way an honourable provision for the contingency of his retirement. The world had not then realised the character of Lord Chatham's son. With a noble disinterestedness he refused the prize, and bestowed it on a deserving and needy follower of his father's. The world, which had anticipated a contrary decision, were staggered at the unaccustomed spectacle. The Minister who, with no fortune of his own, had the courage to refuse a magnificent sinecure, was proclaimed to be worthy indeed of the confidence of the people. The great Whig historian has commemorated in eloquent language the striking instance which the great Tory Minister thus afforded of contempt of mere pecuniary considerations. No historian, with the eloquence of a Macaulay, has

held up Perceval's conduct in 1810 as an example to us. But the Radical author of the British Premiers has told us that he was corrupt. The great Whig wit has described him as a man who tried to be well paid. Yet here he had an opportunity of obtaining for himself or for his son a provision of 2700*l.* a-year. With a far smaller justification, Lord Liverpool, four years previously, had made himself, on Pitt's death, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. 'There is not a man, I am persuaded, on the Opposition side of the House,' so wrote Lord Palmerston to his sister, 'who would not have taken it (the Tellership) under similar circumstances.' Yet Perceval, like his great predecessor, put away the prize, and gave it to the poorest of his prominent supporters—Charles Yorke.

It is not the object of this biography to underrate Pitt's disinterestedness. But Perceval's biographer would be failing in his duty if he did not claim for him at least equal honour. Pitt was poor, but a bachelor. Perceval was equally poor, but the father of a large family. Pitt had only himself to consider; Perceval had others to think of. Pitt had abandoned his profession before he had derived from it a competence. Perceval had sacrificed a professional income of from 5000*l.* to 10,000*l.* a-year to serve his country. Perceval's temptation was, therefore, greater than Pitt's; his claims were greater, too.

It is some satisfaction to reflect that the extent

of the sacrifice, and the principles which had prompted it, were appreciated at the time.

'The King,' wrote George the Third to Perceval on the 28th January, 'has learnt with great concern the melancholy event which vacates one of the Tellerships of the Exchequer. In communicating to Mr. Perceval his approbation of his recommendation of Mr. Yorke for that situation, His Majesty cannot in sufficient terms express his sense of the liberality and public spirit which Mr. Perceval shows upon this occasion, when an opportunity occurred of making a handsome provision for one of his numerous family, and where, indeed, it had already occurred to His Majesty to have proposed such an arrangement to him.'

'It would be idle,' wrote Charles Yorke himself on the same day, 'to endeavour to express, either by words or writing (what it is impossible to do adequately), those feelings of gratitude and veneration towards the King; of personal obligation, admiration, and affectionate regard towards yourself; with which my heart is penetrated upon this most unlooked-for and singular occasion. I do indeed believe that, in the minds of those who are at all capable of judging of honourable and magnanimous actions, the sentiment which His Majesty has so well and so truly expressed must be unanimous; that few men indeed, situated as you are, would have been capable of so disinterested an act as you have performed towards me.'[1]

'It is a great instance,' wrote Lord Palmerston, 'of self-denial and disinterestedness on the part of Perceval that, with his large family, he did not give it (the Tellership) to his son.'[2]

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[1] Perceval MSS.

[2] Lord Palmerston's letter is in Lord Dalling's Life. Lord Dalling erroneously says that Mr. Eden died in February; he died in January.

Three days after these letters were written, Perceval rose to propose a vote of thanks to Lord Wellington for the battle of Talavera. No doubt exists now as to the merits of that great victory. Still less is it possible to question to-day the general policy of the Peninsular War. But, in 1810, the whole Whig party demurred both to the one and the other. Lord Milton met the vote of thanks with an amendment, and actually complained that Sir Arthur Wellesley had merely fought for a peerage. Vernon, in a maiden speech of great ability, said that he would send the Spaniards 'everything we could assist them with, *except a British army.*' General Tarleton could not 'conscientiously vote that the thanks of that House should be given to Lord Wellington.' Whitbread 'could not agree to give a premium to rashness; the Spanish cause was now more hopeless than ever.' And Ponsonby, the leader of the Opposition, inveighed against 'sending Lord Wellington to hazard the treasure of the country where no possible good could result from it.'[1] It is true that the Opposition refrained from dividing. But why did they do so? Obviously because they saw that they had a better opportunity in prospect. A fortnight after the thanks of the House had been voted to Wellington, the King sent a message recommending him for an annuity of 2000*l.* a-year. The struggle was again renewed. Calcraft went so far as to declare that the battle of Talavera 'had

[1] Hansard, xv. 272–802.

been swelled into a victory only by the influence of political connexion to get Lord Wellington a step in the peerage;' another member 'considered the conduct of Lord Wellington as a contradiction to all the military principles set down in the history of the most military nations of the world;' and, in the division that ensued, 106 members were found to vote against the pension, while 213 supported the Minister.[1]

Such was the encouragement which the Minister and the General received from the Opposition in their efforts to bring the Peninsular campaign to a glorious conclusion. Against that Opposition it was Perceval's chief merit that he consistently struggled. The result has been singular. No one now, with the exception of a few deep students of history, connects the Whig party with inveterate hostility to the Peninsular campaign. But everyone who reads Sir W. Napier's brilliant history is aware that Perceval is gibbeted as the Minister who had not the manliness to support it.

In the meanwhile, the inquiry into the expedition to the Scheldt was progressing. Lord Porchester had obtained his Committee on the 26th January. On the 2nd February, the Committee of the whole House met for the first time. The previous year had been wasted with the inquiry into the conduct of

[1] Hansard, xv. 445, 452, 467. The Speaker's editor prints the numbers 213 to 206,—a very serious mistake!

the Duke of York. There seemed every prospect that the present one would be devoted to the causes of the failure at Walcheren. Throughout February and March the long investigation proceeded. But there was one marked difference between it and the circumstances of the previous year. The inquiry into the Duke of York's conduct had been public, and the papers had been daily filled with an account of Mrs. Clarke's ready impudence. The whole nation had been acquainted with the scandalous scene which the House of Commons had daily presented. Warned perhaps by the experience of 1809, Charles Yorke, at the commencement of the present inquiry, had enforced the standing order for the exclusion of strangers. The proposal had led to a strong protest from Sheridan, who desired to refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges; but Sheridan had been beaten by a majority of 2 to 1, and privacy had been secured.[1] It is true that the privacy which was thus secured was only partial; a secret which was shared by 650 gentlemen was obviously no secret at all. The evidence which was given at the inquiry was circulated throughout the Continent; the causes of our failure were known both to our enemies and our allies. But this was the result of the motion itself, and must be the result of any inquiry instituted by the House of Commons. Great representative assemblies cannot, though they nominally close their

[1] Hansard, xv. 345.

doors, preserve their secrecy; great representative assemblies are for this reason unfitted for the conduct of delicate investigations.

The inquiry did not conclude till the 15th March. The subsequent debate duly commenced on the 26th, and terminated on the 30th of that month. At four in the morning of the 31st, the House divided four times. First, they declined by 275 votes to 227 to censure the policy of the expedition; second, they proceeded, by a slightly smaller majority, 272 votes to 232, to approve it; third, they approved, by 275 votes to 224, the retention of Walcheren; and lastly, they excused, by 253 votes to 232, the delay in evacuating it.[1]

The Ministry had escaped, though by the slenderest of majorities. But the inquiry had already exposed them to a fresh danger, and brought on them a serious defeat. Among the papers which had been laid on the table, on the subject of the expedition, was one which purported to be a narrative of Lord Chatham's, the commander of it, addressed direct to the King. The narrative had been prepared in the previous autumn, but it was only delivered to the King on the 15th January, withdrawn a fortnight afterwards, and again presented on the 14th February. The presentation in January had been accompanied with a request for secrecy, and no member of the cabinet had been made acquainted

[1] Hansard, xvi.

with the transaction till after the latter of the two dates. The narrative itself was chiefly directed to 'two points—first, why the Army was not sooner assembled near Batz (a fort at the inmost extremity of South Beveland), and second, why, when it was assembled there, a landing in prosecution of the ulterior objects of the expedition was not deemed advisable. Lord Chatham (by implication) attributes the lateness of the period at which the Army was assembled near Batz to changes in the original plan, adopted by the authorities at home in compliance with the views of others, and not from any suggestion of his own; and to delays in the naval arrangements, which, as he not very indirectly insinuates, were attributable to the dilatoriness of the admiral (Sir R. Strachan).'[1] It was obvious that the Commander-in-Chief of an army in the field was bound to report to his Sovereign through the Secretary of State; and the original instructions, which had been given by Lord Castlereagh to Lord Chatham on the subject, contained an express direction to this very effect. Lord Chatham's narrative then was not merely a violation of the sound constitutional practice of the country, but an infraction of the express orders of his employers. On the 20th February, Lord Folkestone drew attention to the matter, objecting to the House receiving a paper which had been presented to them without the intervention of any Ministers, and for

[1] Colchester, ii. 238.

the contents of which no Minister was consequently responsible. A debate ensued, but eventually a proposal of Perceval's was adopted, and the matter was referred to the Scheldt Committee.[1] But, on the 23rd, a much more serious incident took place. Whitbread moved an address to the Crown for 'copies of all reports, memoranda, narratives, or papers, submitted at any time to His Majesty, by the Earl of Chatham, relative to the late expedition.'[2] Perceval declined to agree to a motion for imaginary documents, the very existence of which had not been ascertained. But the Opposition persisted in its purpose, carried the motion by 178 votes to 171, and beat the Ministry for the fifth time since the meeting of Parliament.[3]

Perceval immediately wrote to the King to inform him of the defeat.

'Mr. Perceval,' he concluded, after narrating the course of the debate, 'laments extremely the loss of this question; but he is in duty bound to state to your Majesty that the prejudice excited by Lord Chatham's narrative, and all the circumstances connected with it, is so great that Mr. Perceval fears the loss of this question will not be the only inconvenience that paper will produce.'

The King's answer was very characteristic :—

'The King is very sorry to learn from Mr. Perceval that Mr. Whitbread has carried the motion of which he gave

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[1] Hansard, xv. 493. [2] Ibid. 564. [3] Ibid. 587.

notice yesterday. His Majesty does not see, however, what embarrassment can attach to the answer to the Address, as the plain simple statement will be that *the King has no paper.*'

'GEORGE R.'

Perceval laid this letter immediately before the Cabinet, and, with their concurrence, wrote more explicitly.

'Mr. Perceval humbly takes leave to acquaint your Majesty that your Majesty's confidential servants met this day to consider what advice they should offer to your Majesty upon the subject of the Address which was carried last night in the House of Commons. Mr. Perceval thought it his duty to lay before them your Majesty's confidential letter to Mr. Perceval of this morning. The embarrassment, which Mr. Perceval conceives to exist upon the subject, arises out of the certainty he feels that, if your Majesty's answer to the House of Commons should only state that your Majesty had no such paper as their address desired to have produced, and that no other communication should be made to the House upon the subject, the impression would be made that there had been another paper presented to your Majesty, and, however contrary such would be to the fact, that such paper had been removed from your Majesty's custody, or destroyed since the motion made in the House of Commons, and for the purpose of preventing the production of it to the House; your Majesty's servants would be suspected of having unworthily advised the withdrawal of such paper for that purpose, and Mr. Perceval has no hesitation in saying that he fears that it would be impossible, in the present state and temper of the House of Commons, to prevent the House from presenting another address to your Majesty to know whether Lord Chatham had not presented to your Majesty another paper relating to the expedition to the

Scheldt, and to entreat your Majesty that your Majesty would acquaint the House who advised your Majesty that it should be withdrawn or destroyed.

'That such an address should be obviated, if possible, Mr. Perceval has no difficulty in stating to be his opinion; but in what manner to advise your Majesty best for the purpose of obviating it admits of very considerable doubt. Your Majesty's confidential servants have determined to meet again to-morrow to consider it further. Mr. Perceval deeply regrets to be obliged to say that this unfortunate subject has occasioned more prejudice to the character of your Majesty's administration, has increased the opinion of a want of communication, concert, and confidence amongst them, and will do more to endanger their stability than any other circumstance whatever which has arisen out of the Walcheren expedition.'

The Cabinet probably conjectured that this very strong remonstrance would induce the King to disclose the full history of Lord Chatham's narrative to the House, and they conjectured rightly.

'In consequence of the letter,' was the King's reply, 'which the King has received from Mr. Perceval this morning, His Majesty readily furnishes him with all the information he can give on the subject of Lord Chatham's paper, of which he may make such use as he shall think advisable. The King received Lord Chatham's report on the 15th of January; and, in consequence of a wish expressed by Lord Chatham on the 7th inst. to make a few verbal alterations, His Majesty returned it to him on the 10th inst. The Report, as altered, was delivered to the Secretary of State on the 14th of February, and His Majesty has not kept any copy or minute of either, nor has he received at any time any other paper on the subject.'[1]

[1] Perceval Papers.

Perceval embodied the substance of this letter in the reply to Whitbread's address. But, notwithstanding the King's concession, the danger was not past.

A week afterwards, Whitbread followed up his victory by proposing two specific resolutions. The first recited the history of the secret narrative; the second went on to declare that 'the Earl of Chatham, by private communication to His Majesty, accompanied by a desire of secrecy, did unconstitutionally abuse the privilege of access to his Sovereign, and thereby afford an example most pernicious in its tendency to His Majesty's service, and to the general service of the State.' Perceval rose when Whitbread sat down. He did not attempt to exculpate Lord Chatham, but he made a strong plea for delay. Why should the House, he argued, pronounce their decision on one part of the evidence till they had concluded the whole inquiry? At any rate give the House the opportunity of reviewing the evidence with some care by adjourning to the following Monday.[1] Whitbread assented to this delay, and Perceval, in the interval, adopted a course which he had no doubt in view when he pressed for a postponement of the discussion. He wrote a long private letter to Lord Chatham with the evident intention to induce the latter to resign. 'I have great reason to fear,' he said, 'that we shall be beat. I have heard to-day

[1] Hansard, xvi. 8.

of many who will keep away, and not support us. Lascelles and the Master of the Rolls are two who think the House of Commons cannot pass over the subject by the previous question. These are authorities of great weight; but still I feel so strongly that if the House of Commons should pronounce any judgment against this proceeding of yours—especially if they characterize it as unconstitutional—it will be impossible that the King's service can go on (particularly in our state of weakness) with the weight of such a vote against any one of his servants, and therefore that at all events it is necessary to resist it. This I shall do to the best of my power. But I should not think that I acted fairly by you, if I did not thus fully apprise you of the view which I take of this unfortunate business.'

Lord Chatham, however, did not resign. The adjourned debate took place in the evening; the Opposition mustered in great force, and Perceval's proposal to pass to the previous question was rejected by 221 votes to 188.[1] Whitbread's first resolution was then put and carried; but an amendment of Canning's, declaring Lord Chatham's conduct 'highly reprehensible' and deserving 'the censure of this House,' was substituted for the second. It was obvious to everyone that Lord Chatham must resign. Yet, if we may judge from the private papers that Perceval left behind him, he hesitated throughout the Tuesday

[1] Hansard, xvi. 16.

on the course he should pursue. But, on the evening of that day, Whitbread asked Arbuthnot privately 'whether Lord Chatham was still Master-General of the Ordnance.' Arbuthnot replied he was; on which Whitbread observed, 'Well, I shall wait a day or two, and then I shall put the same question publicly.' Perceval at once communicated the conversation to Lord Chatham, and the latter at last resolved to resign.

It was now necessary to fill up the vacant office. Perceval, in the first instance, offered it through Lord Bathurst to Lord Pembroke; but Lord Pembroke, who was laid up with gout at Wilton, had no disposition to accept office, and declined.[1] His refusal suggested the possibility of a more extended arrangement.

'Lord Mulgrave's health had been for a long time wearing under the weight of his duties at the Admiralty; and he had been giving me notice for some months of his utter inability to stay much longer at that post. His removal to the Ordnance necessarily would make a vacancy for an efficient man; Lord Camden would leave his situation at the Privy Council; and my friend Ryder would readily retire from his office, if by means of his retirement we could secure additional support. I also could separate the two offices of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. . . . . Under these circumstances it was the common feeling of us all that it was desirable to make some attempt. What that attempt should be was not so easy a

[1] Perceval MS.

matter to discover. . . . . After all that had passed there was, as you may imagine, much repugnance felt by most of us to applying to Canning; and for an application to Canning and his friends alone no one was desirous. . . . . Lord Wellesley even, who feels most strongly the necessity for not omitting Canning in any attempt which might be made, perfectly agreed in thinking that Canning alone would not do. But his idea was that it was not impossible to propose to all these several parties (Canning, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth) a junction with us, upon the principle of collecting again all the remains of Pitt's friends . . . at this period of danger. . . . It was, therefore, determined that an attempt should be made to see whether the idea was practicable. I was to ascertain what Lord Sidmouth's feelings might be, and Lord Castlereagh's: Lord Wellesley was to ascertain Canning's. I thought it hopeless to attempt anything with Lord Castlereagh, unless I could inform him that Lord Sidmouth would assent to the arrangement. Under this impression, I got Yorke to call upon Lord Sidmouth. . . . All the detail, that passed between Yorke and Lord Sidmouth, Lord Sidmouth insisted on being considered as confidential, except the general result that such an extensive arrangement he could never be a party to. . . . This answer rendered it unnecessary for me to make any inquiry of Castlereagh, as it appeared to me quite impossible that he would consent to come to us with Canning except upon the principle of such an extended arrangement. Lord Wellesley's communication with Canning was by Canning made so perfectly confidential that there is no means of stating to your Grace the view that he would have taken if such a proposal had been made to him. Nor indeed is it very material; because in all our opinions it would not answer to make the application to him alone. It only then remained for us to consider whether we could be reconciled to make another application to Lord Sidmouth and Lord Castlereagh upon a more limited principle; without, in short, applying at the

same time to Canning. To this Lord Wellesley could not be reconciled, and therefore we determined, not as a matter of choice but of necessity, to meet Parliament again without any other alteration than Lord Mulgrave's removal to the Ordnance, and Mr. Yorke's appointment to succeed him."[1]

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[1] Perceval to the Duke of Richmond, 30th April, 1810. This letter gives, of course, a very different account of the matter from that which has usually been published. Pellew, in his 'Life of Addington," writes as if Lord Sidmouth's objections in April were similar to those which he had entertained in the previous autumn. Pellew was evidently ignorant of the particulars of Lord Sidmouth's interview with Charles Yorke. Perceval's account is corroborated by Charles Yorke. Here is the latter gentleman's account of it; his letter is only dated Tuesday—Charles Yorke had a bad habit of neglecting to date his letters—but it was probably written on Tuesday the 17th or 24th April. 'I have just,' he writes, 'seen Lord Sidmouth, and parted with him after a most satisfactory conversation. I am persuaded that (supposing the *only obstacle* removed) you will find every possible disposition to conciliation, confidence, and business. I find I was perfectly correct in my understanding of his intentions; and I am now authorised to repeat to you that, in the case supposed of C—— being out of the question, Lord Sidmouth is perfectly ready, on your intimating a wish to that effect, to meet and converse with you (*here* or elsewhere, as may be convenient) on the state of public affairs, and on the mode of forming a satisfactory arrangement for carrying on the Government. All he wishes is that his readiness to communicate on this subject may be kept to yourself till the proper moment for its being disclosed; it being understood that you are at liberty to speak of his decided objection to the *general arrangement* first proposed, in the manner which has been already stated. After your conference together (an event I look to with the greatest anxiety, as being likely to bring together, and I trust permanently, two men whom I so much value both on public and private grounds) it is to be understood that Lord S. will be sent for by the King; it being a mark of honour and confidence to which he thinks himself entitled, in which I entirely agree with him. On

Even this arrangement had involved some hesitation. Perceval was in doubt between the rival claims of Lord Gambier and Charles Yorke.

'Mr. Perceval should not hesitate,' so he wrote to the King, 'in preferring Mr. Yorke, if he did not feel some doubt whether there is not at this moment a temporary feeling of hostility against him,[1] which might make it neither so agreeable to himself, nor so useful to your Majesty's service, to place him in that situation, as it would be at another time. But, if your Majesty would permit Mr. Perceval so to do, he would prefer frankly communicating upon the subject with Mr. Yorke before he made any proposition to Lord Gambier.'

The King's answer deserves quoting, because it

all other points I feel persuaded that you will find him exactly as you could wish, looking certainly to what is fair and honourable as far as he is concerned, but principally anxious to mark his cordial disposition to unite with you as *the head of the King's Government* in the House of Commons, and to assist in strengthening as much as possible the King's present Government. He added a wish that, if circumstances were propitious, it might be the permanent and ultimate political connexion for himself.' (Perceval MSS.) The four seats in the Cabinet are exactly what Lord Sidmouth understood to be vacant. (Pellew's 'Sidmouth, iii.)

[1] Yorke's unpopularity was probably due to two causes: first, he was the member who had constantly moved the exclusion of strangers during the Walcheren inquiry; and who was indirectly, therefore, the cause of the Dean, Gale Jones, and Burdett debates; second, his acceptance of the Tellership of the Exchequer had raised him a host of enemies. Even Lord Palmerston thought it 'almost a pity he had taken it' (*vide* letter to his sister, 27th April, in Lord Dalling's life); and the Opposition were continually saying that the place ought to have been given to Lord Wellington, and the latter's pension saved.

affords a striking illustration of the vigour which George the Third retained almost on the eve of his last illness.

'The removal of Lord Mulgrave' to the Ordnance would 'under every consideration,' wrote His Majesty, 'be most eligible, particularly as this arrangement would open the Admiralty for Mr. Yorke, the benefit of whose services should not, in His Majesty's opinion, be sacrificed to any apprehension of a temporary feeling of unpopularity so unjustly raised against him. If, however, Mr. Perceval should see that objection in so strong a light as to induce him to persist in it, or, if Mr. Yorke should give way to it, the King must observe that, although he has a high opinion of Lord Gambier's honourable character and of his courage, he conceives that his appointment to the Admiralty would not be a popular one with the Navy, in which his professional abilities are not held in the highest estimation. That consequently it would be very desirable if some arrangement could be made within the Cabinet, by the transfer of one of the members of which to the Admiralty a situation might still be opened which should afford the means of strengthening the Government. . . . His Majesty has fairly stated the reasons which appear to him to operate against Lord Gambier's appointment; but, if Mr. Perceval should, upon a further view of the subject, find it impossible to make the arrangement proposed, by removing a member of the Cabinet to the Admiralty, His Majesty wishes it to be understood that he does not then object to Lord Gambier.'

This communication practically compelled Perceval to apply to Yorke; and to Yorke he accordingly applied. But Yorke seems to have immediately pointed to the very objections to his taking office at that moment, which Perceval had already sug-

gested to the King; and Perceval, in consequence, turned to Dundas. There was no doubt good policy in the move. Lord Melville had never been satisfied with his own position and the status of the Ministry. He had probably been annoyed at the unauthorised publication in the 'Courier' and the 'Post,' in the preceding January, of an abstract of the correspondence which he had had with Perceval in the preceding autumn. Dundas' own position had, in consequence of this state of things, become so irksome that he had actually on the 14th April formally resigned; and had only assented after a very strong solicitation to continue in office.[1] Under these circumstances Per-

[1] The correspondence with Dundas was as follows :—

'*Hertford Street*, 14*th April*, 1810.

'Dear Perceval,—I have occasionally hinted to you in conversation that the line of conduct which my father has felt himself called upon to adopt, in regard to the present Administration, places me in a predicament which is not only most irksome, but which it was impossible for me to anticipate.

'You will probably recollect that, on my first arrival from Ireland after the Duke of Portland's resignation, I stated to you that, unless I had reason to suppose (in consequence of communications which I had made to him) that he would be on a more cordial footing with the Administration then forming than he had been with the Duke of Portland's, I must be permitted to decline accepting any office whatever.

'It is needless now to recapitulate all the reasons which induced me to form that determination: they are partly of a personal nature, and partly public, having reference especially to Scotland, and the conduct of the affairs of Government in that country. I shall only state that all these reasons remain in full force, and that they now compel me, however reluctantly, to

ceval thought not only that 'Mr. Dundas' good sense, temper, and firmness would enable him to

request that you will solicit His Majesty's permission for my retiring from the Board of Control.

'I had nearly resolved to make this representation to you some time ago, when I first mentioned the subject to you in conversation; but, as the Scheldt inquiry was then depending, I did not wish by any act of mine to bring the Government into greater jeopardy than could be avoided on the eve of such a question coming to a final determination. When that period arrived, I had some reason to hope, from what had previously passed at a Cabinet meeting at your house, that some changes in the Administration might have been arranged which would perhaps have induced a more cordial support from my father, and which would have consequently rendered my resignation unnecessary. The proceedings in regard to Sir F. Burdett then intervened, and put all other considerations out of the question, except the most advisable and decided mode of crushing his resistance to the authority of the House of Commons, and in fact of the Government.

'I am now without any option on the subject.

'It is matter of no small consolation to me that at the present moment (as far as I can form a judgment) the Administration, though far from being strong, yet stands on firmer ground than at any period since your appointment to the situation which you now hold; and I have no doubt that you may make a new arrangement for the Board of Control without any risk to your Government, and certainly without any detriment to that branch of the public service. I only hope that my successor may be named before the close of the Easter holidays.

'I think it right and fair to apprise you that, though my being out of office will not alter my own views of what is due to you and your Administration, the language which my father now holds in regard to it is of too hostile a character to allow of my indulging any expectation that his conduct will long be restrained even within its present bounds, more especially when I shall have retired. It has come to a crisis in which I must either break off all political connexion with him, and endeavour to attach to the present Administration as large a portion as possible of *his* friends

discharge the duties of the office extremely well;' but that 'his appointment may also have the effect

in Scotland, or I must act inconsistently with my duty to His Majesty and his Government. I rely with confidence on His Majesty's indulgence that he will not insist on my continuing to serve him under such a painful alternative.

'I have already adverted to the hope which I entertained that you might have been enabled, after the Scheldt inquiry was concluded, to strengthen your Administration. There is nothing in my opinion so mischievous, especially in these times, as the Government being in a predicament in which, from whatever cause, they cannot insure, on any important occasion, the support of the House of Commons. The personal interest and comfort of the King is *not* involved in the continuance of such a state of things, and the interest of the Crown is most materially injured. When I contend that the personal comfort of the King is not risked, I do it under the impression and belief that none of the leading political parties or characters existing in the country (the Jacobins and their abettors excepted) would *now* venture, especially after all their late declarations and pledges, express and implied, to intrude any question of the nature to which I allude; and most assuredly the country would not tamely acquiesce in such a proceeding. I am aware that there are many difficulties in the way of forming a stronger Administration; but I do not think they are insurmountable, and I am persuaded that the public interest requires that the attempt should be made. It may be done with sufficient caution and management (with the concurrence of your colleagues) to obviate the risk of any such public discussion as took place with Lords Grenville and Grey.

'This is an unpleasant letter for me to write; but you may believe me, dear Perceval,

'Yours, most truly and sincerely,

(Signed) 'ROBERT DUNDAS.'

Perceval replied on the following day:—

'I am perfectly sensible of the kindness which leads you to console yourself upon this occasion by thinking that, at the moment when you have found yourself compelled to make this

of making Lord Melville better satisfied, and less likely to come forward with any motions or speeches hostile to your Majesty's Government, which, if he does make them, are most likely to be directed against the management of the Admiralty."[1] Dundas took a night to consult his father, and consider; and in the morning refused. Perceval upon this fell back on Charles Yorke. The latter consented to waive his former objections; and the King closed the correspondence by characteristically saying that he could not 'but consider it very desirable that His Government should give a proof of its firmness and of the conviction of its stability by bringing forward a meri-

request, the Administration, though far from being strong, yet stands on firmer ground than at any period since it has been formed. Were its situation, however, in point of strength ten times what it is, and such as to render the retiring of yourself and your friends from its support a matter of no importance to its stability, yet—I am not speaking my individual sentiments alone, but, I firmly believe, that of all my colleagues when—I assure you that I should feel the deepest regret at parting with a colleague whose manly understanding, and whose frank and honourable principles of conduct, render all communication with him so truly satisfactory. But I cannot concur with you in thinking that the late events, however much they may have given spirit to our friends and confounded our opponents, have given us any such addition of strength as would in the slightest degree compensate for the loss of you and your friends . . . .'

Dundas, on this strong appeal, wrote another letter to say that he would see his father, and endeavour to remove the cause of his own determination to resign. Lord Melville subsequently saw not only his son, but Perceval, and was induced to take a more favourable view of the Administration; and Dundas consequently withdrew his resignation.—*Perceval Papers.*

[1] Perceval to the King, 27th April.

torious individual, whose proceedings have ever been upright, in contempt of a clamour which has been excited upon grounds which are not maintainable."[1]

While these negotiations were going on, Parliament had been the scene of a very unusual conflict. The conflict had been occasioned by the very man who was introduced, on Lord Chatham's retirement, into the Ministry. Early in February Charles Yorke had moved the enforcing of the Standing Order for the exclusion of strangers during the Walcheren inquiry. Sheridan had drawn attention to the subject, and Windham, in the debate which ensued, had made some very foolish and unnecessary observations on the press. 'He did not wish,' he said, 'to establish such a power in the press as to enable it to control Parliament. He did not know any of the conductors of the press; but he understood them to be a set of men who would give into the corrupt representations of opposite sides; and he was therefore determined not to lend his hand to abrogate an order which was made to correct an abuse."[2] So spoke Windham on the 6th February. In the following week the walls of the metropolis were placarded with a paper, announcing the discussion at an obscure debating club in Covent Garden of the question—Which was the greater outrage on public feeling, Mr. Yorke's enforcement of the Standing

[1] The King to Perceval, 29th April.
[2] Hansard, xv. 330.

Order to exclude strangers from the House of Commons, or Mr. Windham's recent attack on the liberty of the Press? The placard was no doubt scurrilous, but it was contemptible; and the best policy would have been to have paid no attention to it. But Yorke, in accordance, it must be admitted, with the ordinary practice of the time, drew attention to the matter as a gross breach of privilege; and, equally in accordance with custom, the House as a matter of course ordered the printer, one Dean, to attend. Dean accordingly attended on the morrow, and had the good sense to ask pardon for his offence, and give up the name of his employer—Gale Jones. Dean was imprisoned for twenty-four hours, solemnly reprimanded, and discharged. Gale Jones was unquestionably a more formidable offender. He was the secretary of the famous Corresponding Society, the members of which had more than once been the subject of State prosecutions. It was hardly to be anticipated that the timid politicians of those days would overlook such an offence from such a man, and Jones was accordingly committed to Newgate.[1]

On the 12th March, after Jones had been in Newgate three weeks, Sir F. Burdett drew attention to his case and proposed his release. The Ministry resisted the motion on the ground that no person, confined by order of the House, had ever been dis-

[1] Hansard, v. 497, 502.

charged till he had presented a petition acknowledging his offence and expressing contrition for it; and Sir F. Burdett's motion was immediately rejected by a very large majority, 153 votes to 14.[1]

Burdett's speech had been intemperate; he had been called to order, in the course of it, by the Speaker; but his subsequent conduct was simply indefensible. He addressed a long letter to his constituents, which he published in 'Cobbett's Political Register,' denying the authority of the House to imprison Jones. The letter and the argument will be found in Hansard. The extreme impropriety of the language in which these documents were couched may perhaps be inferred from the opening passage of the one, and the concluding passage of the other.

'The House of Commons,' the letter began, 'having passed a vote which amounts to a declaration that an order of theirs is to be of more authority than Magna Charta and the laws of the land, I think it my duty to lay my sentiments thereon before my constituents, whose character as

[1] Gale Jones subsequently found a defender in Sir S. Romilly. The latter, on the 16th April, moved a resolution for his release, basing his motion on the ground that the punishment had been already sufficient for the offence. Romilly was supported by the Master of the Rolls, Canning, and Wilberforce. He was opposed both by the Speaker and Perceval, on the ground that the practice of Parliament, if not universal, was general, not to release from such commitment but upon petition. Whitbread insisted on the hardship of compelling a man to recant his real opinions. But the House followed its ordinary practice, and defeated Sir S. Romilly by 170 votes to 112.

freemen, and even whose personal safety, depend in no small degree upon the decision of this question— . . . whether our liberty be still to be secured by the laws of our forefathers, or be to lay at the absolute mercy of *a part of our fellow-subjects, collected together by means which it is not necessary for me to describe.*' 'One cannot,' so the argument concluded, 'help entertaining a fear that the gentlemen of the House of Commons may in time, unless they revert to the great principles of the Constitution, be in danger of incurring the sentence of St. Paul upon the insolent and tyrannical High Priest Ananias, who had commanded him to be stricken for opening his mouth in his own defence; "God shall smite thee—thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?"'

Lethbridge, the member for Somersetshire, drew attention to the matter on the 27th March. The Speaker then 'told Sir Francis Burdett, "This was his time to be heard upon the subject of his complaint, after which he was to withdraw." He sat silent. Lord Folkestone desired Lethbridge would point out the particular passages he objected to; and Lethbridge did so. Sir Francis Burdett then said that "he had no intention of violating the privileges of the House; and, not knowing that he had done so, he had only to say that he remained of the opinion that he had expressed in that publication," and then he withdrew.'[1]

Such was the Speaker's account of the unusual scene. After Sir Francis had left the House, the Op-

[1] Colchester, ii. 241.

position pleaded for delay, and proposed to adjourn the debate till the following Friday. Perceval insisted on resuming the discussion on the morrow. A division ensued. 196 members supported the Minister,[1] 146 only were in favour of the longer adjournment. On the morrow 'resumed,' wrote the Speaker, 'the debate on Sir F. Burdett. An adjournment till to-morrow se'nnight was moved by Brand, and the question was debated till half-past twelve. Romilly and Lord Folkestone *doubted* the right of commitment. Adair, Whitbread, Tierney, Windham, Brand, Bathurst, and the Master of the Rolls maintained the right, though some of them contended they had not had time to pronounce on the libel. Perceval made an able speech upon all the points; but, upon the Master of the Rolls rising at half-past twelve to support the adjournment, he gave way, and there was no division. He, nevertheless, protested that he yielded to the call, and not to the argument.'

The adjourned debate took place on the 5th April. A proposal of Lord Folkestone's to pass to the other orders of the day was negatived by 271 votes to 80. The Opposition then endeavoured to substitute a reprimand for imprisonment; and Sir R. Salusbury accordingly suggested that Sir F. Burdett should be reprimanded in his place. The amendment was, however, rejected by 190 votes to

[1] Hansard, xvi. 136–194.

[2] Colchester, ii. 242; Hansard, xvi. 258, 286, 305.

158. The original motion for the commitment to the Tower was then carried; and the House adjourned at half-past seven in the morning.[1]

The Speaker could hardly have gone to bed that night at all. The Serjeant-at-Arms and the Deputy Serjeant came home with him from the House. The warrants were made out and signed; the Serjeants instructed to arrest the Baronet immediately. But two hours afterwards these officers returned. Sir F. Burdett was not at home; the Serjeant had written to him, and had received the Honourable Baronet's assurance that he would attend at twelve o'clock on the morrow. When the House met at half-past three Sir Francis was still at large.

The Speaker was very angry; his orders had been positive; Sir Francis ought to have been arrested under them in the forenoon; the Serjeant must return immediately and effect the arrest. Ryder, the Home Secretary, was present when these orders were given, and volunteered any civil aid that was wanted. But, in the meanwhile, the opportunity for a quiet arrest had gone by. A large mob was assembled in Piccadilly. The Magistrate, who had been appointed to attend the Civil Power, thought that, in the face of such a mob, nothing

[1] Hansard, xvi. 547. Lord Colchester says that Lord Folkestone's motion was 'to put it off further for six months.' But this was obviously a slip of the Speaker's pen, which his editor would have done well to have corrected. — *Vide* Colchester, ii. 245.

could be done. The Serjeant even doubted whether the Speaker's warrant justified his breaking open doors; the Speaker was unable to inform him of the powers of his own warrant; and the day ended with a threat from the Serjeant to the Baronet, that he would effect the arrest early on the following morning; and a threat from the Baronet to the Speaker, that the latter's warrant was illegal, and that he should resist it.

So ended the Friday. Very early on the following morning, the Serjeant went to Sir Francis' house, but Sir Francis was not at home. The Serjeant left a messenger in the hall with the warrant in his pocket, and drove off himself to Burdett's country house at Wimbledon; but Sir Francis was not at Wimbledon. Somebody told him the Baronet was in the streets; and to the streets this zealous officer literally proposed to go,—a proceeding about as useful as the traditional operation of searching for a needle in a bundle of hay.

In the meanwhile Sir Francis walked quietly into his own house. The Serjeant's messenger served the warrant on him. The Baronet told him that he had seen it before and put it into his pocket. The messenger then told him that he must not lose sight of him, and Sir Francis had him quietly turned out of the house. At seven o'clock on that evening the Speaker found it necessary to issue a fresh warrant; and at nine one of the Sheriffs of the County

came to him to say that Sir Francis had applied to him for protection against the Speaker.

Perceval at this point took the management of affairs into his own hands. Late on Saturday evening he told the Serjeant that the first thing to be done was to ascertain the powers of the warrant under which he was acting. The Attorney-General's opinion was taken that very evening. Sir Vicary Gibbs' opinion was not very clear, but he seems on the whole to have indicated that the responsibility of proceeding must rest with the officers, but that at any rate nothing should be done either at night or on Sunday. The next day was Sunday; so that the Attorney-General's opinion necessarily involved another day's delay. Early on the Monday morning, the Serjeant plucked up a little courage; the Government had given him all the force he desired; and had promised to indemnify him to the utmost of their power; and the arrest was accordingly made on the Monday which should have been effected on the preceding Thursday.

The consequences of this delay were lamentable. On the Thursday morning no one was in the streets; Sir Francis was himself inclined to yield; and the arrest would have led to no disorders. On that evening Piccadilly was in the possession of a mob. On Friday a riot ensued, and two or three soldiers were wounded; on Saturday London was in a state of siege; troops were called in from all quarters. On

the Monday, after the arrest had been effected, the Guards were pelted; and they in their turn were compelled to fire.[1] These disorders, this bloodshed, had arisen from the hesitation and procrastination of the Serjeant-at-arms.

The House, on the Monday afternoon, presented an animated scene. Sir F. Burdett's letter to the Speaker was read, and, on Perceval's motion, ordered to lie on the table. The Speaker gave an account of what had passed; the Serjeant-at-arms was called in to report on his own proceedings, and was examined and cross-examined at considerable length by the House; the evidence was ordered to be printed; and the excited assembly sought in an adjournment leisure for reflection.

Perceval communicated his view of the subject to the Speaker.

'The letter of Sir Francis Burdett,' he wrote, 'is ex-

[1] A very discreditable debate subsequently arose on this point. The Government very naturally offered a reward for the discovery and apprehension of persons alleged to have fired at the military during the late disturbances. Lord Ossulston, a friend of Burdett's, asked Ryder in the House whether he was also prepared to offer a reward for the discovery of the Lifeguardsman who had fired the shot by which a citizen had unfortunately been killed. Whitbread actually followed up the question with a motion that the verdict of the coroner's jury—Wilful Murder against some Lifeguardsman unknown—should be laid before the House. Perceval, of course, resisted the motion. 'Were members,' he asked, 'to be inspectors of verdicts of coroners' inquests and indictments for murder?' and the motion was ultimately rejected without a division. (Hansard, xvi. 746.)

[2] Colchester, ii. 245–255.

tremely perplexing; not to let it lie on the table is in fact to put up with the insult as much as if we let it lie there. Expulsion, as it must lead to an *election at Westminster*, is not to be thought of. But, in the midst of difficulties, I rather incline to order it to lie on the table (or to order that the said letter be entered in the journals of the House), and to resolve that the said letter is a great aggravation of Sir Francis Burdett's offence against the rights and privileges of this House; but considering that it appears by the report of the Serjeant-at-Arms attending this House, that the warrant for the commitment of Sir Francis Burdett to the Tower *has been executed*, it is the opinion of this House that the Orders of the day be now read.'

The Speaker must have received this letter a few minutes before the House met. Curzon opened the debate with a very temperate speech, in which he insisted on the necessity of supporting the Executive at the present moment, and proposed to defer all further consideration of the letter for six months; he was seconded by Giddy, and followed by Adam, who attacked the Ministry in the most violent manner, condemning them for all the miscarriages of the previous week. Perceval replied with unusual warmth, justly laid the blame on those who had hesitated to execute the warrant, and proposed, as an amendment to Curzon's motion, the resolution which he had already submitted to the Speaker. A long debate ensued; the amendment was subjected to a slight verbal amendment, and carried unanimously.[1]

The House probably concluded, when they

[1] Hansard, xvi. 630.

separated at an early hour on the following morning, that they had done with Sir F. Burdett; they had, on the contrary, hardly begun with him. On the following day, the Speaker received a notice from Burdett's attorneys that Sir Francis was on the eve of instituting proceedings against him. The Speaker sent the paper to his solicitors, gave orders for retaining the Attorney and Solicitor-General, Adam, Taunton, and Garrow; and on the advice of Perceval, whom he consulted, communicated the notice to the House. The notice was ordered to be entered on the journals, but no further steps were taken on it at the time.[1]

On the following Sunday Perceval came to the Speaker after Church, and discussed the question. The Speaker wished to consider the action itself a breach of privilege; to arrest the attorneys concerned in it; and in short effectually to stop all proceedings. Perceval hesitated to adopt so decided a course, and he casually gave an excellent reason for not adopting it. Sir F. Burdett had not only brought an action against the Speaker, but had also instituted proceedings against the Serjeant-at-arms. The case against the Serjeant, who had effected the arrest, was on the whole stronger than that against the Speaker, who had only directed it; and, while possibly the action against the Speaker might have been warned off on the ground of privilege, there

[1] Colchester, ii. 457; Ibid. 261.

was more difficulty in warning off the proceedings against the Serjeant. If then the House chose to take its stand on the highest ground, the immediate result of its doing so would be the separation of the two actions, which it was the first object of the Government to keep together. Perceval therefore left the Speaker on the Sunday with an evident inclination to allow the action to proceed. A few days afterwards the House separated for the short Easter recess. On its reassembling, the Speaker went to Perceval's, and entered into a very full discussion of the case. Perceval was still disinclined to take the extreme course of stopping the suit by arresting all the attorneys concerned in it, and was disposed to favour the appointment of a Select Committee 'to consider of the fit course of proceeding, and to manage the defence of the action.'[1] The Speaker was evidently dissatisfied, and turned to the Opposition for the assistance he was unable to obtain from the Minister. He took occasion to speak both to Ponsonby and Tierney two days after his interview with Perceval. Ponsonby entered much more warmly into his feelings than Perceval had done. He thought 'we had been remiss in not at once committing the attorney who served the notice of the action, and that it would be *highly dangerous* to surrender our privileges to the judgment of the inferior courts.'[2] Two days afterwards, the Speaker

[1] Colchester, ii. 267. [2] Ibid. 269.

saw Canning. The latter took a far more temperate view of the matter. He clearly contemplated the possibility of the Commons obtaining such immoderate power as should enable them to become formidable and overbearing in contests with the Crown or other branches of the constitution.[1] The bias of his mind therefore was for the *law* course, and not for the *authoritative* course. Two days afterwards, on the 7th May, the question came formally before the House. The Speaker asked for instructions on the notices which he had received. 'Perceval proposed a Committee; Ponsonby objected; Whitbread also. Sir Arthur Piggott was not for it, but spoke at large in vindication of the rights of the House in contradiction to the novel doctrines out-of-doors. Tierney spoke against empowering the Committee to report opinions, &c. At length the Committee was carried upon a division of 116 to 46.' 'The Ministers,' wrote Sir S. Romilly, 'were much more moderate in their language than the Opposition.'[2]

The Committee presented its first report in two days. The actions against the Speaker and the Serjeant they declared to be a breach of privilege. The House had the power, and had occasionally exercised it, of committing the solicitor and other persons concerned in the action. But the commit-

[1] Colchester, ii. 272.

[2] Ibid. 272; Hansard, xvi. 869; Romilly, ii.

ment would not necessarily stop the proceedings, because the Court, before whom the action was brought, could not stay the suit till it was 'informed by due course of legal proceeding that such action was brought for a thing done by order of the House.' The Committee therefore concluded that both the Speaker and the Serjeant should be allowed to plead, and that the House should undertake their defence.[1]

The House adopted the advice of their Committee. The Speaker, notwithstanding the indignation of the Opposition, was permitted to plead. The action was tried. The proceedings were, however, subsequently moved by writ of error into the House of Lords, so that, as Romilly quaintly remarks, 'the Lords were ultimately called upon to decide on the privileges of the Commons!'

Exactly two years afterwards, the Speaker, in a few epigrammatic remarks on Perceval's character, after paying the highest possible compliment to his debating powers, complained that his treatment and management of the House of Commons were unsatisfactory, and that he was not desirous of holding high its character and authority. The Speaker cites Burdett's case as the chief illustration of his meaning. In other words, he still regarded with extreme disfavour, in 1812, Perceval's reluctance, in 1810, to adopt his own high-handed method of procedure.

[1] Colchester, ii. 275; Hansard, xvi.

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It is not perhaps remarkable that the Speaker should have been exceptionally sensitive on this subject. He was nervously apprehensive of the case being brought before a jury, and of some Radical juryman holding out for the sake of gaining a notoriety for himself by recording a verdict against the House of Commons. But there can hardly be the shadow of a doubt, at the present time, that Perceval was in the right and the Speaker in the wrong. Whatever opinion may be formed of the wisdom of the previous proceedings, of the committal of Gale Jones, or of the arrest of Sir F. Burdett, it can hardly be possible for the most bigoted person to regret that the Minister should have hesitated to adopt the arbitrary policy which the Speaker perhaps naturally desired, and the Opposition, not very creditably, favoured.[1]

[1] Burdett was only released on the prorogation. Three petitions were presented, during the session, for his release. On the 17th April a great meeting was held in Palace Yard, and a very disrespectful petition agreed on. Lord Cochrane presented it, and moved that it should lie on the table. The petition was styled the petition and *remonstrance*. It was characterised by so true a reformer as Curwen as highly indecent; while the Honourable J. Ward insisted that, if the House should receive it, 'it would submit to the grossest violation of its dignity.' Perceval interposed. In the case of a petition, he would rather err on the side of indulgence than on the side of severity; and, in accordance with this temperate counsel, the petition was received. A much more indecent document was the result: some of the freeholders of Middlesex agreed on a petition which, in the most disrespectful terms, denounced the conduct of the House of Commons. Perceval declared that it was impossible to consider it 'in any other light

The Session of 1809 had been almost entirely devoted to the inquiry into the conduct of the Duke of York; the Session of 1810 had been similarly occupied with the protracted debates on the Walcheren Expedition, and the unfortunate discussions on privilege to which they had either directly or indirectly led. Comparatively little leisure was left for the discussion of the serious business of the year. Perceval proposed the Budget on the 16th May. The total supplies of the year, which had been voted, amounted to 52,000,000*l.* 6,000,000*l.* of this sum was a separate charge on Ireland; the remainder, or 46,000,000*l.*, fell on Great Britain. Of this amount, the Annual Duties were estimated to produce

than that of a deliberate and unparalleled insult to the House,' and moved its rejection. Some of the Opposition ventured to declare that the Minister was endeavouring to narrow the right of petition. 'The honourable gentleman,' replied Wilberforce, 'acted rather hastily and unfairly towards the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whose feelings and actions were strongly indicative of a high zeal for the public interest, when he accused him of wishing to narrow the right of the subject to petition. How could the honourable gentleman do this if he recollected that, when his own friends, and even the friends of the right honourable gentleman, joined in expressing most strongly an opinion against the Westminster petition, his right honourable friend had distinctly stated the dangers on the one side and the favourable circumstances on the other, and candidly declared that in his judgment the balance was in favour of receiving the petition.' The House supported Perceval by a large majority, and rejected the petition by 139 votes to 58. (Hansard, xvi. 818.) In the following week another petition from the Livery of London was rejected on similar grounds. (Ib. 944.) Petitions from Cheshire, Sheffield, and other places were also similarly treated.

3,000,000*l.*; the War Taxes, 19,500,000*l.*; and the Lottery, 350,000*l.*; the surplus of the Consolidated Fund, a little over 6,000,000*l.*; the vote of credit, 3,000,000*l.* Towards the remainder it was proposed to issue 5,300,000*l.* of Exchequer Bills to replace those which had been funded in the previous year, and to raise 8,000,000*l.* by a loan.[1]

Perceval descanted with justifiable pride on the visible improvement and prosperity of the country. Every branch of our revenue was growing with increasing rapidity. The trade of the country was continually expanding. In 1802, the year of peace and prosperity, the official value of our imports only amounted to 31,440,000*l.* In the previous twelve months, it had exceeded 36,255,000*l.* The exports of British manufactures in 1802 had been less than 30,000,000*l.* In 1809–10, they had exceeded 35,100,000*l.* Perceval, too, could point to other indications of the same tale. 'The great canals and extensive docks; the great public works which were on all sides establishing.' As the result of this prosperity, he was able to tell the Committee that

[1] It must always be remembered, in considering the financial expenditure of the early periods of the present century, that the total expenditure voted was a very different thing from the total expenditure. The whole amount of the Consolidated Fund never figured on the balance-sheet, as Parliament had no control over any portion of it. In the same way the revenue assigned to the Consolidated Fund was omitted from the financial statement, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer only troubled himself with either the surplus or deficit of the latter, as the case might be.

he had succeeded in negotiating the new loan on the most favourable terms on which this country had ever borrowed. The process of raising it was complicated; but the practical result was that the country had to pay rather less than $4\frac{1}{4}$ per cent for the sum which was required. For the interest of the new loan he trusted entirely to the growing produce of the Consolidated Fund, which he showed to demonstration was more than sufficient to meet the burden.[1]

The speech and the scheme were well received. Huskisson testified immediately to 'the very able statement of his right honourable friend;' Rose declared himself unable to account for the prosperity of the country; and Tierney fastened on this very prosperity as a reason for inquiry. No one seems to have suspected the real cause of the anomaly. That we were prosperous, marvellously prosperous, was certain: but it is no less true that the prosperity which we were enjoying was to a certain extent fictitious. Our financial condition in 1810 might, with some truth, be compared to the fiscal state of Italy to-day. Italy is burdened, as we were burdened, with an enormous expenditure. Italy is labouring, as we were labouring, under a heavy taxation. Italy is borrowing, as we were also borrowing, large sums of money every year. Yet the trade of Italy is rapidly expanding; her revenue is

[1] Hansard, xvi. 1043.

continually growing. Public works, of acknowledged utility, are being pressed forward throughout the Peninsula. A new Rome is rising from the ruins of the city of the Cæsars; a new Florence is replacing the mediæval town on the banks of the Arno. These great works, these appearances of wealth, meet the traveller at every turn. But they are due to the inflated currency which, at the cost, perhaps, of future ruin, is ensuring a momentary prosperity. In the same way the suspension of cash payments in 1797 had enabled England to don an aspect of fictitious prosperity which far exceeded what she had a right to assume.

Horner seems to have guessed the real state of things more accurately than any of his contemporaries. With Perceval's assent he had obtained, in the spring of 1810, a committee on the high price of gold bullion.[1] The committee met frequently under Horner's presidency, and ultimately agreed on an elaborate report, which formed the foundation of some discussion in the following Session. It is only fair, however, to add that, though the prosperity of the country may have been fictitious, it was absolutely impossible in 1810 to resume cash payments. Their resumption taxed, with extraordinary severity, the credit of the country after peace had been restored. It would have involved utter ruin while the war was in progress. Perceval had not

[1] Hansard, xv. 275.

made the system; it was the legacy of Pitt: the inevitable consequence of the tremendous contest in which we were engaged.

The ways and means of the year had been agreed to with unusual ease. But the House had continued the efforts which it had previously begun to reduce the expenditure of the country by the correction of abuses. Early in the Session, Bankes moved for leave to bring in a Bill to make perpetual the temporary Act of the previous Session for preventing the grant of offices in reversion. Perceval met the proposal with a suggestion that the Act should only be continued for a further limited period. The suggestion, however, met with no support. Bankes obtained the leave he required. The bill passed through all its stages in the Commons, though it was ultimately rejected by the Lords.[1] On the 12th of February Fuller asked leave to bring in a Bill for the Abolition of Sinecure Offices.[2] The grievance was a great one. The Finance Committee, in their report of the previous Session, had estimated that these sinecures literally absorbed 1,500,000*l.* Fuller seems to have introduced the motion in an

[1] Hansard, xv. 257, 608.

[2] Fuller was the member who had disturbed the Walcheren Committee by profane oaths and other misconduct. He was handed over to the Serjeant-at-Arms, reprimanded, and discharged. (Colchester, ii. 237.) His speeches were constantly interlarded with a 'By G—, Sir!' or other similar expressions. For instance, he once told Burdett that, 'if he spoke one way and voted another, by G—, neither side would employ him!' (Hansard, xv. 457.)

unusually temperate speech, but he was followed by Ward, Lord Dudley's son, in a violent attack on the Ministry. 'There was no article of expense so great,' he exclaimed, 'as an obstinate, weak, and projecting ministry.' Perceval replied. A debate ensued. Bankes complained that Fuller's motion was premature, announced his intention of dealing with the subject himself, and the motion was withdrawn. On the 19th March the consideration of the subject was resumed. Martin drew attention to the third report of the Finance Committee; dilated on the fact that the burden arising out of sinecures amounted to no less than 1,500,000*l.* a-year; and concluded a long speech by moving, 'That it was the peculiar duty of that House to promote economy in the public expenditure.' Perceval, with the evident intention of making the resolution point a little less sharply to the Finance Report, tacked on to it the words 'of all branches of His Majesty's government.' The ground being thus cleared, a debate ensued on a proposal of Bankes to abolish sinecures; substitute pensions as rewards for conspicuous merit; and appoint a Select Committee to decide to which offices the regulation was applicable. The discussion was ultimately adjourned, and it was not renewed for two months, or till the 17th May.[1] Canning, on this occasion, supported Bankes; and, in consequence of his defection, the Ministry was defeated in a small

[1] Hansard, xvi. 18–31.

house by 99 votes to 93.[1] The discussion was again renewed on the last day of the month. Bankes again beat the Minister in two successive divisions, 105 to 95, and 111 to 100; and obtained the Committee which he desired.[2]

Two other matters deserve perhaps some mention. Parliamentary Reform and Catholic Emancipation had been exalted into the position of stock subjects annually debated in Parliament. Brand proposed a motion for the one on the 22nd May. It was resisted by the Government, and defeated by a very large majority, 234 votes to 115.[3] Grattan presented numerous petitions from the Roman Catholics in February, and raised a very able and very protracted debate upon them on the 18th May. The debate was twice adjourned to the 25th May and 1st June, and ultimately Grattan's motion was rejected by a very large majority, 213 votes to 109. The only special interest which attached to this protracted debate was the alteration in the position of the Catholics themselves on the veto. In 1808 Grattan had formally announced that he was authorised to propose that His Majesty, to obviate the possibility of foreign interference, might negative the nomination of a Catholic Bishop. 'In other words to say that no Catholic Bishops shall be appointed without the entire approbation of His Majesty.' The proposition was made on the authority of Dr. Milner, the

[1] Hansard, xvi. 1103. [2] Ibid. xvii. 229. [3] Ibid. 164.

accredited agent of the Irish Catholic hierachy. But it was subsequently rejected by the Irish themselves; and Grattan, in his speech in 1810, had to announce its withdrawal.[1] This change of front naturally weakened the Catholic course. Canning spoke against Grattan in the Commons; Lord Grenville absented himself from the debate in the Lords. When the friends of emancipation behaved in this way, the opposition of its chief opponents cannot be wondered at.

[1] Pict. Hist. viii. 618.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WAR IN SPAIN.

1810.

The Peninsular War—Difficulties of the English Government—Perceval's Consistent Opposition to French Domination—Inconvenience resulting from the Want of Bullion—Trade with Spanish Colonies—Loan solicited by Spain—Negotiations with the Spanish Government—Perceval's Correspondence with Lord Wellesley—Difficulty of Providing for the Army in Spain—Letter from Lord Wellington.

THE time of Parliament had, for two years, been occupied most undesirably with delicate investigations, elaborate inquiries, and privilege debates. But the Ministry, in the interval, had not neglected graver matters. They had sent Sir Arthur Wellesley to the Peninsula, and they were actively supporting the revolt of the Spaniards against the French invasion.

The difficulties before them were excessive. Spain was ruined, and dependent for power to continue her exertions on the support of this country. But this country, in its turn, had some difficulty in providing for the support of its own Army alone. It was true that our credit was still firm; that money could still be borrowed by the Government

on the most advantageous terms; and that increased taxation had not interfered with the growth of the revenue. But the prosperity of Great Britain was in part fictitious. Our supply of money was large, but the money only circulated within the limits of the United Kingdom. The suspension of cash payments had drawn gold away, and all the transactions of business, all the purchases of daily life had to be negotiated in inconvertible paper. Paper-money, however, was useless in the Peninsula. There coin was alone available. There every payment had to be made in gold or silver. The Ministry, conducting the campaign, were consequently under a double disadvantage. They had not only to raise money for carrying on the struggle, but they had subsequently to convert the money into bullion. The Treasury had less difficulty in obtaining the ways and means than in the purchase with those ways and means of specie.

The difficulty was, in reality, greater than was foreseen. At the close of 1809, it had been calculated that the War in the Peninsula would involve a gross charge of 3,000,000*l.* a-year. In the course of the autumn, it became apparent that a sum of at least 5,000,000*l.* would be necessary. The Minister, who had formed his financial plans on the faith of the lower estimate, had suddenly to devise means for meeting the larger one. And the means, it must be remembered, had to be provided in the face of a hostile opposition and a doubting country. There

was, indeed, some ground for fearing that no good consequences would result from our expedition to the Peninsula. Had not Sir Arthur Wellesley's first campaign terminated in a disgraceful convention? Had not Sir John Moore's expedition resulted in a disastrous retreat? Why was the prospect in 1810 fairer than the promise in 1809? Brougham, in 'The Edinburgh Review,' was eloquently describing the quixotic nature of the task to which Ministers were committing us. Whitbread, Ponsonby, Tarleton, Vernon, Lord Milton, Calcraft, and a host of others, were opposing the continuance of the struggle in the House of Commons. There was only one man on the Treasury Bench who had either the capacity or the courage to reply to these continuous onslaughts. If Perceval had been less determined, or less able, Wellington would have been withdrawn from the Peninsula in the spring of 1810.

But Perceval was not likely to yield. From his first entry into Parliament, he had been the most consistent of all the opponents to French ambition. He rose now to the necessities of the great occasion in which he was placed. Lord Wellington had been sent to Spain. It had been supposed that some 3,000,000*l.* a-year would have been sufficient to support the war, and it was suddenly found necessary to devote 5,000,000*l.* for the purpose. Where was the additional sum to be found? Where was the bullion to be obtained in exchange for the ways and means? Our trade was in a marvellous condition.

Neither the orders in Council, nor the non-intercourse Act, had interfered with its continual growth. Our imports and exports were rising steadily at the rate of millions a-year. But trade alone could not provide specie. The available bullion was hoarded in remote places, and gold was as rare in London as it is in Italy now. South America, indeed, was rich in the mineral wealth which, three hundred years before, had attracted a Cortes to Mexico, and a Pizarro to Peru. But Spain monopolised the trade with her great dependencies. The British merchantman was excluded from the only ports where specie was obtainable. The pay of the British soldier was in arrear, because Spain, dependent as she was on the British, would not allow an English merchant to export bullion from her South American possessions.

This state of things Perceval wisely determined should not continue. He was willing to support Spain to the utmost of his power; but he insisted that, in return for her support, Great Britain had a right to claim some moderate privileges. His views on the subject are so fully expressed by the following letters that it is not necessary to make any further comment on them.

Perceval to Lord Wellesley :—

'*Downing Street, March* 4, 1810.

'My dear Lord,—I do not know exactly what instructions your brother (Henry Wellesley, subsequently Lord Cowley) 'is under at Cadiz, with respect to the endeavours that he should make to prevail upon the Spanish Junta to admit of

British merchants trading to South America; but it appears to me to be a subject, just now particularly, of the most interesting nature. It seems that it could not be difficult to persuade the Spanish Government that the present state of the War in the Peninsula precludes all idea of a successful pursuit of trade from Spain by Spanish subjects either to South America or anywhere else; that the Spanish colonies, therefore, deprived of the means of European intercourse through the mother country, will not be contented to be deprived of it altogether; that they will get it therefore either clandestinely, or by some open act of their own, which may shake their permanent connexion with their mother country; whereas any indulgence given to foreign trade, temporarily, and, under the circumstances of the present war, by moderated duties and permitted intercourse to foreign vessels, might be withdrawn whenever the state of things was altered, and whenever Spain could resume the trade herself. Indeed, nothing more than an increase of duty upon merchandise imported in foreign shipping would be required to restore her extensive trade with her own colonies.

'Considering, also, that we are the only nation that is giving Spain any assistance in the contest, and that America, which is almost the only nation which could beside ourselves benefit by such opening of the trade, is as nearly hostile to Spain as she can be without actually declaring war against her, is it too much to press that such opening should be made specially in our favour, either by opening it to us exclusively, or upon such preferable terms, with regard to duties upon British goods and British shipping, as to give us a decided benefit and preference in the trade? If this could be conceded, it would lead naturally to the appointment of consuls to the leading places in South America, from which we should be enabled to derive intelligence at least of the most authentic kind. If these concessions cannot be procured it *is essential to our being enabled to feed and pay our*

army in the Peninsula and in Sicily, that we should have liberty of exporting bullion, in some way or other, from South America. To be permitted to export it without paying the duties would be most advantageous; but perhaps that is more than could fairly be asked without our paying in some other way an equivalent for those duties. But I think a license to permit any person, whom we may employ, to export for Great Britain the dollars of Mexico, in return for British merchandise, may fairly be required; and, if such liberty is not speedily obtained, I do not see how we shall be able to pay our army out of the kingdom.

'I am, &c.

'SP. PERCEVAL.'[1]

Another circumstance enabled him in the following month to increase the pressure. The Spanish Government, in the commencement of April, sent an envoy, Admiral Apodacea, to this country to obtain a loan of 2,000,000*l.* The loan, it was proposed, should be repayable in six instalments; the first instalment to be due six years after the conclusion of the War. Perceval naturally saw in the application a new opportunity for negotiating with the Spanish Government, and, on the 19th April, he accordingly made another effort.

'*Downing Street, April 19th*, 1810.

'My dear Lord,—In observation upon Admiral Apodacea's letter, which I return, I will state to you in a few words

[1] Drafts of this and the following letters are among the Perceval Papers. For the originals, and many others of the Wellesley Papers in this volume, I am indebted to Mr. Alfred Montgomery, who placed Lord Wellesley's correspondence with Perceval at my disposal.

my ideas upon it. I have intended to propose a vote of credit for 3,000,000*l.*, by which sum I meant to cover such unforeseen services of Portugal and Spain, and any other parts of the world, as might occur, as well as to provide in such manner for any deficiencies in grants for our own services, as might enable us to go on without meeting Parliament again before Christmas. I should think that the application of some portion of this sum to the loan to Spain would be wise, but, if we were to allow 2,000,000*l.* for this purpose, we should leave the remainder of the vote of credit very short for other services. I should therefore very much prefer confining it to 1,500,000*l.*

'But I cannot consent to that, or any smaller sum, because I could not undertake to carry a vote for it through Parliament, nor, indeed, should I think myself justifiable in proposing it, unless the Spanish Government will come to a liberal understanding with respect to the trade to their colonies, at least during the period of the war, and for such time longer as the debt due from Spain to this country shall remain unpaid.

'These terms should be to admit of a direct trade between this country, as well as the free ports in our West India Islands, and their colonies, for the import and export of the produce and manufactures of each country respectively in British or Spanish ships; Spain imposing not more than from 20 to 25 per cent duty on the invoice prices of the articles of the produce and manufacture of this country when imported into the Spanish colonies.

'On our part, that we will stipulate in that treaty to admit the produce and manufactures of Spain and her colonies into this country upon the terms of the most favoured nation—with the exception only (if that exception be necessary, which I hope it is not, under the treaty with Portugal) of Spanish wines.

'But I think we may and ought to insist (considering that we are the only nation in the world which is befriending

Spain, and that America particularly is acting a most unfriendly part), that Spain should stipulate to give to our trade a preference in her ports, or at least in her colonies, over all other countries; and either not to open them at all to any other country during the war, or at least not to open them, except under terms of a considerably higher rate of duty, upon the produce, and manufacture, and trade, of such other countries than what may be imposed on ours.

'I would upon these terms have no objection to letting the payment of the loan, together with the interest at five per cent, be protracted till six years after the termination of the war, and at the rate of dollar exchange proposed in Admiral Apodacea's letter.

'I would have no objection to agree that our Consul at Cadiz should immediately, upon the ratification of the treaty, be empowered to draw upon this country to the amount of 200,000*l.* per month till the whole sum was advanced.

'And that we would immediately upon the ratification of the treaty remit to Cadiz, or any other port of Spain, such portion of the amount of the loan as Spain might desire, in *any articles of supply* which she may want from this country, and which this country can afford to give her. The remittance of such articles should not be counted a diminution of the first monthly instalments, but only in reduction of the total amount of the loan and in satisfaction of it *pro tanto*. The further this mode of payment is adopted, the more easy the loan would be to us.

'I think we cannot undertake to pay now the 200,000*l.* per month by bills or in money; as this payment would very much affect the exchange with Spain and increase the difficulty of obtaining specie for the payment of our own troops both at Cadiz and in Portugal.

'It would be well also to come to some understanding with the Spanish Government, so as to prevail upon them to give our Consul at Cadiz all the assistance they can towards

negotiating his bills for the purpose of raising money to pay our armies in Spain and Portugal.

'But the point respecting the trade with the colonies is the *essential and indispensable point.* The precise amount of duties, to be raised in their colonies upon the importation of our produce and manufactures, I should not wish you to specify without communicating with Bathurst.

'If, instead of a loan, for which the payment of both interest and principal should be postponed, they would be contented to have a loan for which they should pay the interest and a two per cent sinking fund, from the time of contracting the debt to the time of its ultimate discharge (always understanding that they agree to the commercial terms), and, if they would agree to give *assignments on their treasury at Mexico for dollars,* to be shipped on board a British ship-of-war half yearly, to an amount sufficient to discharge such interest and sinking fund, I should in that case not object to carrying the loan to 2,000,000*l.*, and to undertake to provide a British ship for the conveyance of such dollars, in time to bring them to this country by the end of June and the end of December in each year.

'If you will be at home between two and three o'clock to-day I will call upon you on this and other subjects, but I conceived breaking the subject in this way to you would save the time of both of us.

'The necessity and reasonableness of the commercial terms I think must be felt by Spain. It is only through our commerce that we can keep up our exertions, or find the means even of advancing this very money. Our enemy is endeavouring by new expedients every day to curtail and destroy our commerce in Europe, and we cannot stand unless the other parts of the world open new resources to our trade.

'Limiting the engagement to the continuance of the war and the duration of the debt, is putting it on a footing which can only interfere with Spanish commerce during a

period when, not commerce, but war, ought to be the business of Spain; or when peace will open to Spain the means, by discharging the debt, of getting rid of the engagement.

'I think it may also be advisable, but this is not absolutely necessary, to come to some account as to the amount of the debt at present due from Spain to us.

'I am, &c.

(Signed) 'SP. PERCEVAL.'

'Marquis Wellesley.'

The necessities of the Spanish Government had the precise effect which Perceval anticipated, as the next letter will prove.

'My dear Lord,—I have received your brother's despatch upon the subject of the commercial treaty with Spain. It is very important; and its contents I think satisfactory. I agree with him that, as we find the Government of Spain now in the proper temper, we should avail ourselves of it without loss of time.

'The impression, which seems to be entertained by that Government, that we have dealt hardly with the Prince of Brazils in the commercial treaty with him, ought to be removed. I think that you cannot do that better, nor perhaps more easily furnish your brother with instructions for negotiating the treaty with Spain, than by sending him a copy of the treaty, as far as it is yet settled with the Brazils, together with the instructions and correspondence from Canning and Lord Strangford upon the subject of it. Your brother will see from thence how to repel the charge of our having dealt hardly with the Portuguese, and also see the points on which it is material for him to contend in the treaty with Spain.

'But, if there are any points, which for final settlement

might be necessary, and yet occasion difficulty—such as permission for our merchants to reside in the colonies of Spain, or anything else—I should think he might get those points adjourned for further settlement, and content himself if he can get the liberty of direct trade to and from the Spanish colonies under moderate duties for British shipping, and also a moderated reduction of duty in Spain itself and her European islands, as well as the Canaries, if that is not done already.

'The suggestion of the Spanish Minister, that we should by this treaty stipulate for the amount of annual assistance which we may be able to furnish to Spain during the war, I conceive not to be wise. To stipulate the amount beforehand would necessarily require that we should limit it within those bounds which we could undertake absolutely, and at all events, to continue. To what extent we may be enabled to go next year it would be almost impossible to say; but to carry our undertaking further it would be impossible to see our way to any precise and large amount.

'Our exertions in Portugal are direct aid to Spain. As they stand at present, they cannot be considered as amounting to less than four or five millions a-year, including pay, clothing, levy money, subsistence, &c. &c. for our own troops as well as the Portuguese in Cadiz as well as in Portugal. While this great matter, but necessary expense and exertion, is maintained by this country, separate aid to Spain by money must necessarily be very limited.

'If Spain for a great exertion in this year wants money or military stores to a considerable amount, we might undertake for an aid to the extent of 1,500,000*l.*; or, possibly, if a very large proportion of that aid was to be in clothing or stores, rather than in money, it might be carried to 2,000,000*l.*, upon supposition of our having a free intercourse with the Spanish colonies, including the liberty to export from thence bullion and specie, as well as other articles of their produce; and a loan to that extent, upon the

terms specified in my former note, I should not object to your brother's having power to negotiate. If they would prefer an annual loan during the war, to the amount of *one million*, on the same terms, I think he might be authorised to stipulate for that instead of the other. I think the Spanish Government should be set at ease at once with regard to the duty payable upon the specie, which they permit us to export under the license recently granted, and I think your brother should be permitted to say that we do not feel any title or wish that they should let us have it without the payment of a proper rate of duty; and that we certainly will agree to let the amount of the duty, due upon the exportation, go into the account between the two countries, and in reduction of our claims upon Spain. If we could have that treaty arranged and settled before Parliament rises, it would be a great object; if it could be arranged on broad principles, subject to future modification in detail, it might perhaps be possible. But it can hardly be hoped for if it is to be considered as a final settlement of this great object.'[1]

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[1] The remainder of the letter is hardly in point; but it is so creditable to Perceval that it must be preserved in a note:—

'As a point of feeling and character, *private* and *natural*, as well as upon higher principles even of humanity, justice, benevolence, and religion, I should be anxious, as I know you would also, that we should procure the great object of the abolition of the slave-trade by Spain. The point should be undoubtedly brought forward and urged, but to press it as a *sine quâ non* would be unreasonable, considering the state of mistaken prejudice upon that subject.

'I am sure you will not understand me as fancying that, in the above scrawl, I have suggested anything which has not already occurred to you. But I thought it might perhaps save your time if you had by this note the opportunity of collecting, without further delay of communication, the general outline of my view upon the subject.

Perceval, therefore, had laid down the precise amount of pecuniary assistance which this country could lend to Spain, and the exact manner in which it should be given. Henry Wellesley, however, very

'There is another point on which I wish you to consider what ought to be done.

'Under the pressure of the danger to Cadiz, from the number of French prisoners there, your brother has consented to send to England a considerable number of them. They are prisoners which France claims a right to have relieved. If we detain them, can we hope that our negotiation for an exchange can go on with any prospect of success?

'Is it a legitimate thing in modern war for one allied power to turn over to another the custody of its prisoners? If it be so, were the French in alliance with the Algerines, they might send our prisoners to be kept at Algiers. If it is not a legitimate thing, and if therefore, from the necessity and urgency of the case, your brother has consented to the transaction, will it not be the more right and proper course for us, and consequently the most creditable, and I believe even the most politic, to acquaint France at once that we do not mean to keep them as prisoners, but that we will restore them, and explain to the Spanish Government, as well as we can, our reason for doing so?—not putting it on the ground of the illegality of *their* detaining them, which is a question only for the Spaniards to settle, but upon the ground of the illegality, according to the approved usages of modern warfare (if such are the approved usages), of our receiving them from our ally. I do not affect to have a clear opinion upon that question of law. It was brought specially under my notice by a letter of Lord Collingwood's, in which he refused, upon this ground, to take the custody of the French prisoners at Minorca; but I am quite clear, if the question is against us, the sooner we set ourselves right upon it the better.

'Pray excuse this long note,

'and believe me to be, &c.,

'SP. PERCEVAL.

'*Downing Street, Sunday Morning,*

'*April 29th*, 1869.'

naturally desired to strain to the utmost extent possible the resources of this country in favour of the Spanish Government; and in the course of the summer he drew on the Treasury from Cadiz for 400,000*l.* Lord Wellesley announced the matter to Perceval, who had thus the mortification of seeing the money, which he had collected for Lord Wellington's support, diverted by his Lordship's brother to another purpose. On the 14th July, he wrote to Lord Wellesley :—

'My dear Lord,—I return you the papers, which you sent me this evening. I have written in pencil on the margin of your brother's private notes what occurred to me on reading them.

'With respect to your brother's drawing upon us from Cadiz for 400,000*l.* for the Spanish Government, my fear is (and a most alarming one) that Lord Wellington's army will feel the effect of it by being deprived of the supply which the same 400,000*l.* to be raised upon British credit would have afforded it. I tremble for the effect of such a diversion of the supplies, at the command of British credit, from the service of our own army in Portugal, and from the payment of the subsidy to the Portuguese Government. In every other view of the subject I shall be glad that the Spanish Government should be so accommodated. The sum must be taken into the account of the 1,000,000*l.* which, in articles of military necessity, we are capable of supplying before February; and, after February, we might continue to supply at the same rate (namely, of 1,000,000*l.*) for the following six months. But I do not think that even in *kind* we could supply them (supposing our own exertions to continue) at a greater rate than 2,000,000*l.* in the twelve months.

. . . . . .

'The importance of obtaining the money for Portugal as soon as possible should induce your brother to require the payment of the 400,000*l.* out of the first monies to be received from South America. . . . . .

'*Ealing*, I am, &c.'

'*Saturday Evening*, 'SP. PERCEVAL.

'*July* 14, 1810.'

Lord Wellesley replied officially to Henry Wellesley's despatch; but, before sending it, he consulted Perceval on the draft of it. Perceval thought the whole proceeding so objectionable that he strengthened some of Lord Wellesley's expressions, and Lord Wellesley resented these alterations because they had the appearance of reflecting on his brother.

'*Apsley House, Sunday*,

'*July 22nd*, 1810.

'My dear Sir,—I have examined the proposed alterations of my despatch to Mr. Wellesley, and I have adopted such of them as I could approve, after having thrown them into a shape more consistent with the order of my thoughts and with the general tenor of the despatch. The proposed alterations respecting Mr. Wellesley's *supposed* drafts on the Treasury, I confess, appear to me much stronger than the occasion requires. Indeed, all the necessary suggestions of caution appear to me to be quite clearly expressed in the original draft. I now send the whole to you for transmission to the King, requesting you to forward it by the messenger who brings it to you.

'If you should wish the draft to be again altered, I request you to return it to me, as I should not wish it to go to the King without my own final corrections.

'Yours, always most sincerely,

'WELLESLEY.'

Perceval's answer was as follows:—

'My dear Lord,—I went yesterday to pay my duty to His Majesty on the Terrace at Windsor, and did not receive your box till my return home between eleven and twelve o'clock; too late, of course, to communicate with you upon the contents of it, without risking a delay in the transmission of the despatch, which I much wished to avoid, and I therefore forwarded it as it was to His Majesty.

'I now return you the sheet of the draft with my notes. As to the first alteration, which they suggested, respecting Mr. Wellesley's supposed drafts on the Treasury, and which appears to you "much stronger than the occasion requires," I am exceedingly glad that you have not adopted it, if you mean by that expression that the alteration appeared to you to convey anything like censure or disapprobation upon what Mr. Wellesley will have done, if he has ultimately consented to draw the 400,000*l.* Bills on the Treasury; because I had no intention of conveying any such censure or disapprobation, and should have been sorry if any passage in your despatch should have been liable to the construction of either expressing or implying anything of the kind. I consider the urgency with which he was pressed, not only by the importunate demands of the Regency, but by the circumstances under which he was convinced the affairs of the Spanish Government were placed, to amount to a full justification for what he will have done by a compliance with those demands; and, undoubtedly, if the necessary suggestions of caution are quite clearly expressed in the original draft, as you think they are, the alteration was wholly unnecessary.

'But, as I do tremble at what appears to me likely to be the effect of that measure, especially if it should be repeated; as I perceive by Lord Wellington's last monthly estimate that there is considerably more than 100,000*l.* deficient; as I know not where to look for the supply of that deficiency, at the present moment, but to Cadiz; as the 400,000*l.* to be

raised there by this measure upon British credit would, if this resource had been reserved to be applied to British purposes, have done much more than doubly supply that deficiency; and, above all, if the success of this operation (if it should, as I think most likely to be the case, be successful) will certainly induce the Spanish Government to return with redoubled importunity upon Mr. Wellesley, in their next difficulty, to renew the operation; I think it not fair to him, if we do not, not only apprise him of our fears, but arm him, in the strongest manner, against the renewal of this importunity by the reference, which he might be enabled to make, to the commands of his Government; nor, indeed, fair to ourselves, if we do not guard against the deep responsibility which will fall upon us all, but more particularly upon the Treasury, if the British army should be compelled to leave Portugal for the want of those pecuniary supplies which it shall appear British credit might have obtained for it at Cadiz, if we had taken care by sufficient precision in our instructions to prevent our Ministers there from consenting to divert the supplies, which that credit could obtain, to any other purpose than that of providing for our own army.

'Of the success of the operation to obtain 400,000*l.* I think there is but little doubt; but, if it should have the effect of materially depressing the exchange at Cadiz, it will not only greatly enhance all our expenses—not only prevent Lord Wellington from deriving a greater, or even his usual supply of money from thence, but it may also draw even the money that is in Portugal to Cadiz, and thereby even diminish his Portuguese resources. For such money will probably be sent wherever the money speculator finds he can get the most for it. Under all these impressions you will not be surprised at the anxiety which I feel that the necessary suggestions of caution should be most clearly conveyed; and, if they are so conveyed, as you think they are, I am quite satisfied.

'The latter alteration, which I suggested, and you omitted, is one on account of which I had no occasion to delay the despatch, because my object in mentioning it might just as well be obtained—if upon my explanation you think it worth obtaining — by a private letter as by a public despatch.

'My objection to the draft of these bills from Cadiz for Spanish purposes (provided such bills for such purposes do not exceed, together with the supplies in kind from this country, the value of 1,000,000*l.* in six months, which you have in your despatch most clearly provided), is solely on account of the British army in the Peninsula. If, therefore, this supply of 400,000*l.* or even more, could be obtained by means which should at the same time be made contributable, in equal proportion, to the supply of the British army, I am so far from having an objection to it, that I should think it a happy measure at least one certainly by no means inadmissible, and if therefore it shall turn out that it shall have occurred to Mr. Wellesley, when he was getting the 400,000*l.* for Spain, to get as much by the same means for Lord Wellington, my fears and my regrets will be at an end. But it strikes me that it is not unlikely that Mr. Wellesley may think our objections stand upon two grounds, viz. not only on the apprehension of drying up the source of supply for Portugal, but also on the fear of receiving drafts inconveniently large at one time on the British Treasury. I thought it, therefore, desirable, in order to obviate the possibility of his feeling that latter apprehension to the extent of its preventing him from employing the same means for the British army in Portugal as he may have found successful for Spain, that we should let him know that we should not object to the increase of these drafts if drawn for such British purposes, but also that we should expressly recommend it. . . . .

'I am, my dear Lord, Yours most truly,

'*Ealing, July* 23, 1810.' 'Sp. Perceval.

This correspondence was worth preserving both on general and personal grounds. It gives a very graphic and interesting account of the extreme difficulty, under which the Government were labouring in providing for the wants of Wellington's Army in the Peninsula; it strikingly illustrates the industry with which Perceval set himself to overcome every obstacle; and it is a satisfactory explanation of the deficiency, of which the great Duke complained, in the supply of specie to the Army. But, while Perceval was straining every nerve to supply Lord Wellington, he was impressing on his Lordship the absolute necessity for careful management. Lord Wellington, for the moment, was afraid that the Treasury was dissatisfied with the check which he had kept on our expenditure, and expressed to Lord Liverpool his apprehensions. Perceval, to disabuse him of any such apprehensions, wrote the letter of which the following is a copy, to the great General; and this letter, with Lord Wellington's answer to it, will fittingly close this chapter.

The following is a copy of Perceval's letter:—

'My dear Lord,—As I have just sent an official letter from the Treasury to Lord Liverpool, which will naturally be transmitted to your Lordship, containing some observations upon some despatches of yours which had been communicated to that Board by your Lordship, I cannot forbear troubling you with a letter from myself, which may reach you at the same time. I should, at all events, have written to you upon this occasion in order to obviate any possible

misconstruction which might grow out of the official correspondence; but I am more particularly anxious to do so, as I learn from Lord Liverpool that, in one of your private letters to him, you express yourself as in some doubt whether you have given satisfaction to the Department of the Treasury, and that you are led into that doubt by a former official letter to Lord Liverpool from that Board.

'Now, as nothing can be more unfounded than any such doubt, I am extremely anxious to take the best and earliest means of removing it.

'The expenses of the army—British and Portuguese—have certainly far exceeded our expectations, as well as our wishes; they exceeded the first calculations, not much less than in the proportion of five to three, or about 5,000,000*l.* sterling, instead of about 3,000,000*l.* per annum. Such excess, indeed, cannot *give satisfaction*, in the sense of *giving pleasure*, to those whose duty and responsibility calls upon them to provide for it. But I have so perfect and unaffected a reliance upon you; I am so satisfied that you must know that the failure of our pecuniary means is one of the most probable causes of our being compelled to discontinue our assistance to the Peninsula, if we should be compelled to that painful necessity at all; and I feel in consequence so assured that no unnecessary expenditure has been, or will be permitted by you, that *dissatisfaction* in any sense, which implies *blame*, or a *disposition to find fault* with those who are concerned in that expenditure, does not, I do assure you, in the least degree exist in my mind.

'I am confident that from time to time you have given us the best estimate you could of the expenses of your army; but the increased price of provisions and of forage, the necessary increase in the means and in the expense of transport, have been so great, and with many other circumstances have been such, so unexpected and so incapable of distinct anticipation, as naturally to have prevented you, or anyone on the spot, and at least equally those at a

distance, from forming any correct estimate upon this subject. The amount, therefore, of the expense has, I am certain, been an equal disappointment to us all.

'I should, however, feel myself deeply responsible, and I am persuaded I shall necessarily appear highly culpable in the eyes of my colleagues and of yourself, if, with the prospect I had in November or December last of the means which this country could command of furnishing your army with specie, I had given my sanction not only to the assurance which was made to you that your army should be kept up to 30,000 effective men, but also afterwards to the increase of the Portuguese army in our pay, and to the additional force to be sent to the Peninsula for the garrison of Cadiz, provided I had been aware at these several times that these services could not have been performed but at the expense of 5,000,000*l.* per annum; and, therefore, I have thought it necessary, for my own justification in your eyes, and in that of my colleagues, to bring distinctly under the view of Lord Liverpool the grounds upon which I had, I trust justifiably on my part, and, I repeat, most distinctly without any blame on yours, been led to think that the means of supporting those services might be reasonably calculated upon as within our reach. I confess to you that, believing as I now do that this expense is necessary and unavoidable, and entertaining, as I still do, most sanguine hopes of the ultimate success of the Spanish cause in resistance to the French on the Peninsula (for which purpose I look to the continuance of our exertions under you as indispensable) I am glad that I did not know at first more correctly the extent of that expense; for, had I known it before, I should have found it my duty distinctly to state that in my opinion the prospect of being enabled to supply the army with money to that amount was too doubtful to justify our embarking in so extensive a scale of operations. I have not the excuse of being enabled to state that I have been materially disappointed in any of the pecuniary means

on which I calculated; indeed, so far from my being disappointed in the total amount of such means, the fact is that you have found greater supplies for the commissary's bills in Portugal than I at that time expected (from Cadiz, indeed, I certainly had hoped that you might have drawn more abundantly); nor have I been disappointed in the amount of remittance which it has been found possible to make from hence. In the instance, indeed, of our receiving from Buenos Ayres those 210,000 dollars (which are now on their passage to you), our expectations failed us. We had reason to believe we should have procured through the channel which furnished us with that sum 1,000,000 dollars at least; but, generally speaking, we were aware at the latter end of last year of the difficulties which must impede our sending for some time any considerable remittances from this country; so that, however defective the supply may have proved, I must confess that I did not calculate that within the period of the last six months it could have been materially greater, and could not have been justified in assuming that it would have been so great even as it has actually proved.

'Under this impression, then, you will naturally ask, what hopes have I of the future supply of your army?

'The official despatch will point out the grounds on which we trust at the Treasury that the average of the bills negotiated in the Peninsula within the eight months next preceding the 24th of April last, upon which average your estimate proceeds, gives a smaller sum than what may reasonably be expected as the future monthly amount of such bills; and the expected supplies from Vera Cruz, to which that despatch alludes, and a part of which supplies we hope to realise in about a month or six weeks from this time, will be 10,000,000 of dollars; and, as we further hope, we shall be able to continue to receive them at that rate per annum. Although, then, the whole of this cannot be applied to Portugal, on account of the demands upon us for

specie for our army in Sicily and Malta, and in some of our Colonies, yet so much of it may be so applied as, together with the small sums which from time to time may be continued to be collected in the market at home, will, I trust, be sufficient to supply your wants beyond the sums which you will obtain by bills in the Peninsula.

'This statement, however, which I assure you exhibits, to the best of my judgment and belief, after the fullest and most anxious examination which I can give to the subject, a true picture of our means and prospects, will satisfy you that it is not from any indisposition to make the utmost possible exertions in the cause of the Peninsula, that we cannot afford you the least hopes of such large pecuniary means as might enable you to supply the Spanish armies and provinces in your neighbourhood with money to stimulate and equip their exertions. . . .

'If you have thought that this country can make, and continue any greater exertions than it is now making, it is material that you should be undeceived; and, as far as any statement of our decided conviction here that it is impossible can undeceive you, I trust this letter will have that effect. Undoubtedly you would not be satisfied with those, under whom the country is enjoying the benefit of your services, if you thought they were starving the great cause by any mistaken economy or false views of what the nature of that cause required.

'I am, my dear Lord,

'Yours most faithfully and truly,

(Signed) 'SP. PERCEVAL.

'The Lord Viscount Wellington.

'*Downing Street, July* 5, 1810.'

The following was Lord Wellington's reply:—

'*July* 29, 1810.

'My dear Sir,—I am very much obliged for your letter of the 5th instant, which has relieved me from a good deal of uneasiness which I had felt lest it should be believed in England that I had not paid so much attention to economy in the expenditure of the army as it required. I assure you that no expense is incurred which is not necessary, and I do everything in my power to keep the expenses within the narrowest limits. . . . .

'Ever, my dear Sir,

'Yours most faithfully,

'WELLINGTON.'

CHAPTER V.

REGENCY RESOLUTIONS.

1810–1811.

Critical Position of Government—Lord Sidmouth and Canning—Lord Wellesley—Propositions made to Canning and Castlereagh—Correspondence of Canning, Castlereagh, and Perceval—Death of the Princess Amelia—Illness of the King—Meeting of Privy Council—Medical Examination of the King—Regency proposed—Limitations of the Regency—Protest of the Prince of Wales—Growing Reputation of Perceval—Difficulties of his Position—Painful Situation of Lord Grenville.

PARLIAMENT was prorogued on the 21st June. The Session had been more prosperous than the most hopeful of Perceval's friends had anticipated. The Ministry had survived every danger; it had been subjected to only occasional defeat. The resolution of its chief Advocate in the House of Commons, and the dissensions of the Opposition had combined to preserve it from Parliamentary peril.

But, at the same time, the experience of the Session had decisively demonstrated the critical condition of the Government. Its existence depended on the support of persons who might at any

moment be driven into opposition. The small knot of men, who had allied themselves with Lord Sidmouth, and the still smaller group who had identified themselves with Canning, were able at any moment to convert the Ministerial majority into a minority. Bathurst's defection, in the beginning of the Session, had led to the defeat of the Government on the Walcheren Committee; Canning's desertion, towards the close, had contributed to Bankes' successive victories on the Sinecure Resolutions.

Under such circumstances it was obviously the policy of the Minister to attempt to permanently attach to himself one of these two parties. Canning had been his colleague; Sidmouth had been his former leader; there was no reason why either one or the other should decline their co-operation. As a matter of fact Lord Sidmouth, as we have seen, would not have refused a junction. But the Cabinet—or rather Lord Wellesley—had thought that Sidmouth without Canning would be a source rather of weakness than of strength. The negotiation had in consequence passed off; and the Cabinet had been patched up with as little alteration as possible. Nine days, however, before Parliament was prorogued, the negotiation appears to have been renewed. Lord Wellesley, with Perceval's consent, called on Lord Sidmouth, and endeavoured to overcome the objections which the latter entertained to any arrangement in which Canning was included. Lord Wellesley's exertions were fruitless. A subse-

quent interview between Lord Sidmouth and Perceval, was equally ineffectual; and the Cabinet seemed doomed to continue without alteration.[1]

Lord Wellesley thought otherwise. He saw more strongly than any of his colleagues the necessity for securing additional assistance in the House of Commons. He was more blind than they were to the difficulties of any arrangement. Canning's co-operation was the chief object of his endeavours. Canning, with Sidmouth and Castlereagh if it were possible, but Canning under any circumstances. To make Canning's co-operation more likely he was ready to sacrifice his own position; and he actually offered, in the event of Canning being secured, to resign the seals of the Foreign Office, and either retire to some other department, or to continue in the Cabinet without office. Canning, who had no generosity in his disposition, and who was ready to sacrifice Lord Wellesley in July just as he had been willing to sacrifice Lord Eldon nine months before, seems from his letter of the 26th September to have been disposed to listen to the arrangement, on condition that room was at the same time made in the Ministry for his chief friend, Huskisson. In other words, he was ready to serve under Perceval on the very terms which had been perfectly open to him in the preceding autumn.

If, however, Canning was willing on such terms

[1] Sidmouth, iii. 27.

to join the Cabinet, the Cabinet were unwilling to receive Canning alone. Canning, in the opinion of the majority of them, had been in the wrong in his quarrel with Castlereagh in 1809; Canning had at any rate deserted them in the grave crisis of September. Canning, moreover, was so distrusted both by Lord Sidmouth's and Castlereagh's connexions that his own accession to the Ministry, without extraneous strength, would probably have done them more harm than good. The Cabinet then determined that they would sanction no offer to Canning alone. But Lord Wellesley concluded that, though it was impossible to secure Canning with Sidmouth, and though it was impolitic to obtain Canning alone, it might be practicable to effect a junction with Canning and Castlereagh. Perceval, at once, pointed out the obvious difficulties connected with any such arrangement; but Lord Wellesley insisted on the attempt being made, and again renewed his own offer to resign to make way for Canning. Pressed in this way, Perceval availed himself of a Cabinet dinner at Ryder's to consult his colleagues. They resolved that Lord Castlereagh should at any rate be sounded, and commissioned Perceval to undertake the task. Very much to their credit Lord Liverpool and Lord Wellesley both offered to retire from the offices they held in order that Canning and Castlereagh might be in a position to return to the actual situations which they had vacated. But the Cabinet here interposed. If they were to have Canning and Castlereagh back

among them, it seemed obviously desirable that some other offices should be found for them than those which had been the scene of their previous quarrel. Yorke, on this, offered to resign the Admiralty; Ryder, the Home Office. The Home Office and the Admiralty were two of the highest offices in the State; and the Cabinet determined on availing themselves of Yorke's and Ryder's offer, and placing these situations at Castlereagh's and Canning's disposal.

Lord Castlereagh was on his way home, when Perceval's letter was sent to him. He did not receive it in Ireland for a fortnight after it had been despatched. Within four-and-twenty hours after its receipt he declined the offer. 'And so,' wrote Perceval to Lord Eldon, 'ends our negotiation, and the consequence I trust will be that we shall all be determined to do the best we can to stand firmly and unitedly by ourselves when we find that we cannot mend matters.'[1]

The correspondence, so far as it is worth preserving, was as follows:—

1. Lord Wellesley to Perceval:—

'*Private and confidential.*

'*Apsley House, 14th June,* 1810.

'My dear Sir,—The events of the Session of Parliament appear to me to have proved the necessity of augmenting the strength of the Government, especially in the House of

[1] Twiss's 'Eldon,' ii. 126.

Commons. Your information and mine leads to the certainty that it would not be practicable to unite the friends of Lord Sidmouth, Lord Castlereagh, and of Mr. Canning; because it has been ascertained that Lord Sidmouth and his friends cannot consent to act with Mr. Canning.

'Although the grounds of this objection are entitled to great respect, I confess that I cannot admit the justice and reason of such an exclusion, particularly in the present crisis, when Lord Grey has opened such an attack upon all those leading principles which constituted the basis of Mr. Pitt's government.

'Under these circumstances I wish to urge a serious consideration of the necessity of making an immediate effort for the purpose of obtaining the aid of Mr. Canning and his friends. For this purpose I am desirous of vacating the office which I now hold in order to admit Mr. Canning; and I am willing either to accept any other suitable office in the Cabinet, or to remain in the Cabinet without office, until a vacancy can be conveniently made for me. You may be assured that I shall most cheerfully act under either arrangement, provided the great advantage of Mr. Canning's assistance can be obtained by it.

'I have already repeatedly stated this idea to you, but it has not yet been regularly considered by the Cabinet. I wish you would have the goodness to take their opinion upon it as soon as possible.

'Although I cannot positively answer for Mr. Canning's acceptance of a proposal to act in the present Government, I would not suggest such a plan, if I were not convinced that he could not decline an arrangement founded on the basis which I have stated.

'Believe me, &c.,

(Signed) 'WELLESLEY.'

2. Lord Wellesley to Perceval:—

'*Private and confidential.*

'*Dorking, July 23rd,* 1810.

'My dear Sir,—Some time since I took the liberty of stating to you my opinion that, unless some steps were immediately taken to favour Mr. Canning's admission into the Cabinet, that advantage would be entirely lost to the present Government; at the same time I renewed my former offer respecting my present office, and I stated a desire that the subject should again be considered by the Cabinet.

'The great pressure of indispensable matter of practical detail has prevented you and the Cabinet and myself from touching this very delicate but (in my judgment) indispensable discussion. I do not know whether you have had any means of consulting others on the point; when I spoke to you, you seemed still to consider the difficulties with regard to Lord Castlereagh to be insuperable. My information leads me to hope that Lord Castlereagh would be found reasonable and practicable on every part of the question.

'At all events, it is very desirable to bring the matter to a final and positive determination, and (if it is determined to be either useless or dangerous to accept my offer) to apprise Canning distinctly of his situation.

'I understand that he is to see you to-morrow on some ordinary business, and I think great advantage might result from your conversing with him freely on the whole subject, and stating your sense of the difficulties which exist, and hearing his ideas with regard to their removal. For my own part I desire you to consider me to be entirely at your disposal, with a most anxious wish, however, that you would employ me and my office for the purpose of obtaining the benefit of Canning's assistance connected with the accession of Lord Castlereagh.

'Yours, &c.,

(Signed) 'Wellesley.'

'I enclose a note stating in writing the ideas which I have already conveyed to you verbally.'

Enclosure in No. 2 :—

'Since Lord Wellesley made the proposal of opening the situation which he now holds in the Government, for the purpose of obtaining the aid of Mr. Canning, he has learnt that Mr. Canning has received information, through various channels, of the objections which Lord Sidmouth has stated against acting with Mr. Canning.

'The result of this information on Mr. Canning's mind has not been to determine him never to act with Lord Sidmouth, but Mr. Canning thinks that it would be injurious to his just pretensions to suffer his admission into the Cabinet to be subjected again to the will of Lord Sidmouth, and to await any contingent change, which time might produce, in Lord Sidmouth's sentiments.

'In this state of circumstances, any long delay in the execution of the proposed plan of strengthening the Government would render it nearly impossible to obtain the services of Mr. Canning.

'It is further evident that neither Mr. Canning, nor any other person, could enter into the Cabinet with so much advantage at a more advanced period of the season, when the whole system of measures for the year must have already been decided, and when the opportunity of taking a part in the councils of the Government would have passed away, as nothing would remain but the necessity of defending in Parliament what had been done in the Cabinet.

'It has been proved that Lord Sidmouth's assistance cannot be obtained without the adoption of an exclusive system, which would neither be just in principle nor useful in practice.

'It is now certain that any attempt to delay such partial accessions of strength, as might now be obtained, in the hope of ultimately effecting a more general union, instead of promoting that object, would probably render all such partial accessions of strength, as well as any more general union, utterly impracticable at any future time.

'It is not ascertained that Lord Castlereagh would refuse to act with Mr. Canning, and the accession of these two persons to the present Government would certainly furnish great additional strength.

'Lord Wellesley therefore wishes most anxiously that the consideration of this most important subject should be renewed in consequence of the circumstances, which tend to prove that, unless Mr. Canning be now received into the Cabinet, his future admission may become hopeless, and with it all prospect of additional strength may be precluded.

'With this view Lord Wellesley repeats the offer made in his former note to Mr. Perceval, and he further proposes to be the channel of any communication which it may be thought advisable to make to Lord Castlereagh.

'At all events, he thinks that the question should now be finally decided, as it is not reasonable to expect that either Mr. Canning or Lord Castlereagh can long remain open to any venture.

(Initialed) 'W.'

3. Mr. Perceval to Lord Wellesley :—

'My dear Lord,—I have just received your letter, with its inclosure, from Dorking of this day's date. I have had no opportunity of introducing any general discussion upon the subject to which you allude; but I have spoken to several of our colleagues, and I have found that they did not think, any more than myself, that the circumstances which you mentioned made any such alteration in the situation of the question, as to be likely to lead to a different determination. We shall, however, on Tuesday, when we dine together at Ryder's, where I hope I shall meet you, have an opportunity of reconsidering the subject; and, till after that time at least, I certainly should not think of entering upon the

subject with Canning, and therefore shall not, as at present advised, introduce it when he calls upon me. I will gladly talk to you more upon this subject when we next meet.

'I am, &c.

(Signed) 'SP. PERCEVAL.'

The draft is not dated.

4. Mr. Perceval to Lord Castlereagh :—

'My dear Lord,—When you learn that the object of this letter is to ascertain what chance there may be of your being prevailed upon to accept an office in the present Government, you will easily conceive how much I must regret that I did not find myself prepared to open this subject to you before you left the neighbourhood of London. The explanations which may be necessary and must be convenient upon such an occasion, and the facility which conversation affords to such explanations, would have rendered a personal communication upon it infinitely preferable to any which can take place by letter.

'To make this mode of communication, however (which is the only one now open to me), as little defective and as satisfactory as possible, I shall think it necessary to explain to you fully what has been the course of my own thoughts and of those of my colleagues upon this subject, as well as to state to you what has been done by us in consequence.

'Upon one point we have been uniformly unanimous, namely, in the wish to regain your assistance in His Majesty's service. On the best means, and on the greater or less probability of regaining it, as well as upon the circumstances which should accompany any attempt to regain it, we have thought differently; and it is out of the endeavours to reconcile these differences, and to remove the difficulties which they have occasioned, that the delay has arisen in my explaining myself to you.

'That it was expedient for the public service that we should endeavour to procure additional strength to the Government, provided it could be procured consistently with our own honour and character, and with the honour and character of those to whom any overture might be made, has been, from the first moment our Government was formed, the constant opinion of us all. But till its fate, or at least the probability of its continuing to exist for any time, was better ascertained than it could have been previous to the result of the discussions on the Walcheren question, obvious reasons, which it is not at all necessary to detail, rendered any attempt at such a measure, in the opinion of most of us, inexpedient and objectionable. After that discussion was over many difficulties still remained.

'Lord Sidmouth, yourself, and Canning were the three heads of parties to whom alone we could be looking; and, if we had considered nothing but the relative strength of your respective connexions, it would have been obvious that the application to any one of you, with the probable effect of alienating the other two, would not promise us any advantage; whilst the most desirable thing upon every account appeared to be the prevailing upon you all, if possible, to join us. We were all agreed that no offer could be made with propriety to anyone which did not comprehend you, and was not made to you also; that not only the interests of the public service required that we should endeavour to procure your assistance, but that our feelings of what was due to you rendered this indispensably necessary. Lord Wellesley was amongst the first to urge the expediency of a union, including yourself, Lord Sidmouth, and Canning. Lord Wellesley has uniformly been very desirous of obtaining your assistance, and of acting with you on the King's service, and has always stated the justice and propriety of comprehending you in any plan which might be proposed for enlarging the basis of the Government. He has also declared his disapprobation of any plan which should exclude

any of the three parties already named; and, on this ground, as well as for other reasons, he has signified that he would not be a party to any application in any quarter unless a similar application should be made at the same time to Canning. After all that had then so recently happened between you and Canning, and especially while you were both exposed, at any day, to the probability of fresh debates opening the discussions upon your differences, the overture to you and Canning at such a time, unless it could be reconciled to your respective feelings by the circumstances under which it was made, and with which it might be accompanied, appeared to be hopeless: at least it seemed evident that a premature attempt of that nature would, in all probability, not only have failed, but might have had a very probable tendency to.

'Besides these considerations affecting you and Canning, from what were supposed to be the feelings of Lord Sidmouth and Canning towards each other, difficulties likely to prove insurmountable were thought to exist in those quarters to any proposition which should extend to both of them. Lord Wellesley's opinion, indeed, was different on these points. It occurred to him that the state of the King's Government and of the nation was such, as that not only an attempt ought to be made to collect again together in one body all the remaining friends of Pitt's connexion, but that there was reason for thinking that it might be made with a fair prospect of success; that the principle of an overture upon such an extended basis might be forcibly urged upon the individuals to whom it was made, as affording a motive to forget all former feelings in any degree of a personal nature, and to reconcile them, upon public grounds, to unite for the purpose of upholding that system and those principles, which the state of parties exposed to great danger, and called upon public men to make considerable sacrifices to preserve.

'It was obvious that, to make room for an arrangement

on so extended a scale, no inconsiderable sacrifices would be necessary amongst ourselves and our friends; but the object seemed to be so great and permanent as to justify the expectation that such sacrifices would be cheerfully made; and that, whatever awkwardnesses any individuals might have felt from their part in such arrangement, the liberality of the principle, the extent and national importance of the object, would have afforded a complete and satisfactory answer to any objections which could have been felt by themselves or suggested by others to the part which such individuals might have in it.

'Lord Wellesley felt and expressed these considerations very strongly; he thought that Lord Sidmouth and Canning might, without difficulty, be brought to admit the force of them, so as to forget their former feelings towards each other; and, although I confess I was not so sanguine on the subject as he was, yet I certainly did feel that, if they could have been prevailed upon to view the subject in the light above represented, it would have given me the most favourable means for opening a proposition of this kind to you. I therefore consented to the attempt being made with them; and, so long ago as the Easter recess, means were taken to ascertain, both from Lord Sidmouth and Canning, whether, if upon the principle of reassembling the separated members of Pitt's party, an offer should be made comprehending you, Lord Sidmouth, and Canning, and your respective friends, they (Lord S. and Canning) would be disposed to a favourable consideration of it. No direct offer was made, but means were taken to ascertain their sentiments. Had the result been favourable, you would have immediately heard from me. But it was not favourable. Canning declined giving any positive answer to a question of so hypothetical a nature. It was evident, however (although he would not pledge himself without receiving a more distinct and direct proposal), that his reply to any such specific offer would not have been founded on any exclusive principle or personal

prejudice, and that he would not have objected to the mere proposition of acting in a Government either with you or Lord Sidmouth. Lord Sidmouth declined being a party to a union with us upon so extensive a principle. The Easter recess had nearly worn away while we were obtaining and considering the result of these inquiries; and, had we seen any new and satisfactory mode of proceeding upon this subject, it would have been hardly possible to have found time for it during the pressure of Parliamentary business.

'Towards the close of the Session Lord Wellesley still retained the idea that Lord Sidmouth's objections and difficulties might be removed. He thought (especially after Lord Grey's last speech, which appeared to be a declaration of war against all the principles and the whole system of Pitt's Government) that the policy and necessity of an union amongst the remains of Pitt's friends might be made to appear still more plainly, and Lord Sidmouth be prevailed upon to act upon the view which might be given to him of that necessity. He was desirous of trying how far he could himself prevail upon him, and about that time saw Lord Sidmouth and one of his principal friends for that purpose, but he could make no alteration in Lord Sidmouth's determination. Lord Sidmouth upon this occasion explained himself fully. His objection was to Canning, not, as he said, a personal one; not upon any grounds of private or personal dislike; but upon the public ground that he did not think that, if Canning were to make one in the Government formed of himself, of you, and of us, the public would believe that there was that confidence and cordiality amongst ourselves which could alone give us the confidence of the country; and without that confidence the Government could not have that strength which it was the professed object of the proposed arrangement to procure.

'We were thus flung back upon our original difficulties. We had looked to an arrangement on an extended basis as the best calculated to reconcile differences and awkward-

nesses, which might possibly be felt in a more contracted one; yet, as we must now forego all hopes of procuring any additional strength for the King's service, unless an attempt should be made upon the more contracted one; and as the opinion still remains amongst us very strong that we should not be doing our duty to the public if we do not in the interval of the recess make some attempt; after much and frequent deliberation upon these considerations, and in conformity with the clear opinion of myself and colleagues, I have determined to put plainly the question to you, Whether, if I should receive His Majesty's commands to make a joint offer to you and Canning of two of the highest and most efficient and responsible offices of the State, you would be disposed to give a favourable reception to such an offer? And I cannot forbear from expressing my hopes that, when you consider the state of the country, and the great importance of such an accession of strength and stability as this arrangement would give to the King's counsels, you will now, after the interval that has elapsed, see no reason for refusing to give that reception to the proposition, which at an earlier period perhaps you would have found some difficulty in affording.

'In endeavouring to regain both you and Canning to His Majesty's service, it certainly would not only be my wish, but must be an essential object with me, to proceed in such a manner as was most likely to be most acceptable to both your feelings, such necessarily being the most likely course to obtain my purpose. The return of both, or either of you, to your old offices, would not, I think, be likely to obtain this object. If it would be so, in justice to Lord Wellesley and Lord Liverpool, I ought to say that they would willingly part with them for that purpose. It is, however, as it appears to me, obvious that it would be inconvenient that you should *both* return into your former offices, and, if only *one* did so return, the impression might be unfavourable to the other who did not. There remain, therefore, only two other

offices of an efficiency and station which allow of their being offered to you—I mean the Admiralty and the Home Secretary of State. I am empowered to state to you that the present possessors of these offices will have no difficulty in making way for you, and that I shall not be embarrassed by the arrangement which this removal will render necessary. As for the choice between the two offices, I would rather not be put to make it for you, but would wish to leave it to yourselves, if possible, to arrange; and indeed, upon this and every minor point, if you can once be prevailed upon to see, in the great advantage which would be derived to the public in the return of you both to power, a sufficient motive for your giving a favourable reception to the proposition itself, I cannot think that any difficulty can occur which cannot easily be surmounted.

'In putting this question to you to learn what your reception of such an offer, if made, would be likely to be, instead of making the offer itself, you will perceive that I avoid putting it as an offer in His Majesty's name, and thereby save you (in the event of your declining it) from any awkwardness which you might feel in declining a gracious offer from the King; but at the same time I wish you distinctly to understand that I have no difficulty whatever in assuring you that you may rely upon it His Majesty will, without doubt, empower me to make the offer immediately in the most formal manner.

'I ought to state to you that, though Lord Camden has had no objection to continue in office with us, while hypothetical inquiries of this sort have been making as to the manner in which an offer, if made, would be received; and though he was anxious for the success of the arrangement, if it could have been accomplished upon the more extended scale, comprehending Lord Sidmouth and his friends; and though he is also desirous not to stand in the way of *any* arrangement which may be thought advisable for His Majesty's services, yet he has declared that he could not be

a party to the offer itself. He feels hurt at the style and manner in which Canning wrote and circulated the letters to him, and therefore he gives every reason to believe that, though he would support the Government, should the arrangement comprehending you in it take place, yet he will not remain a member of it if Canning comes in. He states this determination always in most perfect good humour to me, and indeed I ought to add that he has always in the most liberal and friendly manner given me to understand that his office was at any time at my disposal, whenever I thought it could be useful to an arrangement advantageous to the King's service.

'Long as this detail and statement are, yet I am fearful that there may be many points in which you may wish for further explanation. If I could foresee those points, I would certainly endeavour to anticipate your inquiries; indeed, my only excuse for the length of this letter is in my desire to anticipate those inquiries. You will naturally feel that I shall be most anxious to receive your answer. I am not, however, so unreasonable as to desire you to hasten it beyond your own convenience; one advantage of a communication upon such a subject at this season is that there is time enough to consider and arrange it.

'However much I may wish that I may have put this subject in such a light as will induce you to receive it favourably, yet, should the contrary unfortunately be the case, I beg you will understand that, as I should have no right to ask for the reasons of your refusal, so I would really prefer that you should not state them. They possibly may be of a nature which, though you may feel them strongly at the moment, may be likely in time to wear out. I should fear that the fact of once formally having stated them may give them a strength and permanency which would not otherwise belong to them, and which it is very material to the public service should not exist.

'I am aware that the subject on which I have been

writing is one of very considerable delicacy, yet I have purposely avoided anything like a formal and ceremonious opening of it. As the explanation of my thoughts and views upon it has been most full and open, I was desirous that the manner of making it should be equally frank, full, and without reserve, and I am persuaded this is the manner which you would most prefer; but, at all events, the letter is too long to admit of being lengthened with any unnecessary apology, and therefore I must conclude with being, my dear Lord,' &c.

Perceval forwarded this draft, or rather the first draft of this draft, to Lord Wellesley; Lord Wellesley corrected and returned it. The draft, as it is given in the text, contains Lord Wellesley's corrections.

5. Lord Castlereagh to Mr. Perceval:—

'*Mountstewart*, 4 *Sept.* 1810.

'My dear Sir,—Having protracted my journey longer than I had intended, I did not receive your letter of the 22nd till yesterday, on my landing.

'Desiring to express in suitable terms to you and your colleagues my sense of the sentiments you are pleased to express towards me personally, I am not less sensible of your attention in relieving me by the mode of your communication from the necessity of declining in any more formal manner a proposition, which it is conceived might contribute to the advantage of His Majesty's service.

'It is unnecessary for me to trouble you with the considerations in detail which suggest themselves to me, upon the reasoning, which you have taken the trouble so fully and candidly to open. It is enough that I should express my own firm persuasion that an arrangement of the nature you propose (even were all obstacles to the cordial conso-

lidation of the arrangement itself successfully surmounted) could not command the public confidence or inspire the nation at the present moment with an impression that the Administration entrusted with the management of affairs was really united within itself.

'Under these impressions, I trust not inconsiderately formed or resulting from any unbecoming feelings of a personal nature, I need hardly add that, were the offer in question made to me, it would be impossible for me to hesitate in soliciting His Majesty's gracious permission dutifully to decline it.

'Believe me, my dear Sir,' &c.

6. Mr. Canning to Mr. Perceval :—

'*Hinckley, Sept.* 25, 1810.

'Dear Perceval,—The communication made to me through Lord Wellesley at Easter, and others which I have subsequently received from him, and with which you are acquainted, have placed me in a situation in which I think it fair both to myself and to you to state to you directly, and without disguise, my sentiments on the subject of those communications. In the course of the Easter recess, Lord Wellesley was commissioned by you and the rest of his colleagues to endeavour to ascertain from me, firstly, Whether I would consent to act with the existing Government *on its present basis?* (By which I understood to be meant, with your *continuance at the head of the Treasury.*)

'Secondly, Whether I would consent to act with a Government which should comprehend the several persons who had at any time been connected with Mr. Pitt? (By which description I understood *Lord Sidmouth and Lord Castlereagh* to be particularly intended.)

'It appeared to me that I could not reasonably be called upon for a gratuitous declaration of my opinion upon questions involving matter of so much personal delicacy. I

declared my readiness to give a distinct answer to any specified and practical proposition; but I declined giving any answer to the two questions thus abstractedly proposed to me.

'Some time in the month of May, or early in June, Lord Wellesley expressed to me an anxious wish to give up the Seals of the Foreign Department, for the purpose of their being offered to me; but previously to his making the tender of this resignation he desired to learn from me whether, if such an offer should be made to me, I would entertain it?

'I took some days to consider of this question, and then informed Lord Wellesley that, if the proposal were to be accompanied with the assurance of his remaining in the Government in some situation satisfactory to himself and with suitable arrangements for those persons with whom I was immediately connected, I would not refuse to entertain it.

'I had learnt in the interval, since Lord Wellesley's first communication to me at Easter, that the same questions, which he had then been employed to put to me, had at the same time been propounded to Lord Sidmouth, and that from the manner in which he had received them all idea of his accession to the Government, on the principles proposed, was at an end.

'I understood from Lord Wellesley that no similar communication had yet been made to Lord Castlereagh; but that it was determined by the Cabinet, with Lord Wellesley's perfect acquiescence, that it would be right to combine an overture to him, with any other overture for obtaining an accession of strength to the Government; and, when I saw Lord Wellesley last, towards the end of August, he informed me that in pursuance of that determination *you* had undertaken to write to Lord Castlereagh, for the purpose of ascertaining whether he would be willing to listen to any overture that might be made to him.

'Lord Wellesley likewise described the nature of the offers which it was in the contemplation of the Government to make jointly or simultaneously to Lord Castlereagh and me if it should appear probable that they might be made with success. But he stated distinctly that he was not then authorised to make any proposition to me, or to receive any answer from me.

'To the proposition then stated by him to be in contemplation, I should have had no hesitation, so far as related to myself, in giving a decided negative. But, complicated as that part which related to me was with the intended offer to Lord Castlereagh, I did not like to anticipate the statement of a refusal, the motive of which might have appeared equivocal.

'I have recently heard from Lord Wellesley that the answer received by you from Lord Castlereagh is such as to show that the Government has no prospect at present of obtaining his accession, but that there is nothing in that answer which appears to point at any personal objection to any individual.

'I can now therefore say, without any apprehension of being misinterpreted, that I should have begged leave to decline the intended offer to me, independently of any consideration of its being coupled with one to Lord Castlereagh.

'I say this with the less scruple; as I have already avowed to you that I should *not* have declined the proposition suggested by Lord Wellesley; and, as I am equally ready to declare that if that proposition were now made to me with the qualifications which I have already described, and were it to be His Majesty's gracious pleasure to command my services in the office in which I had before the honour to serve him, I should *now* be prepared to obey His Majesty's commands.

'I cannot but be aware of the misconstructions, to which the openness of this declaration might expose me, if I could

imagine that any unfair advantage would be taken of it. But, after the discussions which have taken place, I have thought it better that the precise proposition, to which in the course of them my consent was given, should be distinctly defined and understood, than that I should risk the imputations either on the one hand of having been determined to reject *all* overture, or on the other of having been willing to accept anything that might be offered to me.

'The very basis of the proposition which I consented to accept (Lord Wellesley's voluntary resignation of his present office), sufficiently shows that it did not originate with me.

'And, by declaring my readiness to agree with this proposition at the expense of a sacrifice of personal feeling on my part (which I do not pretend to undervalue), I trust I shall at least have attained the object, for which I determined to make that sacrifice, and for which I have now determined to make this declaration: that of proving that it is not by any personal pretensions of mine that the reunion of the friends of Mr. Pitt in the service of the country is rendered impracticable.

'On the other hand, I beg it may be understood that this declaration is on my part final; that it is to the proposition, to which I have referred *alone*, that I have been, or am now, willing to assent; and that, while I have myself scrupulously abstained from anything like an exclusive principle or individual objection, I am not to be considered as acquiescing in such a principle, if stated with respect to me; nor as being ready to wait the good pleasure of any individual.

'I am, dear Perceval,

'Very sincerely yours,

'GEO. CANNING.

'I do not communicate this letter to Lord Wellesley;

though I have of course thought it right to tell him, that I intended writing to you.'

'And so,' as Lord Eldon said, 'ends our negotiation, and the consequence, I trust, will be that we shall all be determined to stand firmly by ourselves.'

The necessity for internal union soon became evident. George the Third had been exposed in the summer and autumn of 1810 to domestic anxiety and domestic affliction. Towards the end of the preceding May an attack had been made on the Duke of Cumberland in his apartments at St. James's Palace. The Duke had been wounded; he had called for assistance; proceeded to rouse his valet; and the latter had been found in his chamber with his throat cut from ear to ear. The mysterious occurrence has never been thoroughly explained; but, on the whole, the most reasonable explanation seems to be that Sellis, the valet, had attempted His Royal Highness's life, and had destroyed himself on finding that he had failed. In 1810, however, many persons thought that suspicion attached to the Duke himself; and the favourable verdict at the inquest seems to have failed to entirely remove this impression. Such an event, and such a suspicion, could not have failed to have produced a perceptible effect on an affectionate father; and that George the Third was an affectionate father his greatest detractors have not denied. The shock, how-

ever, passed away. But, in September, the Princess Amelia, his youngest and favourite daughter, was seriously ill. Towards the close of October she was evidently dying. Before her death she had a ring prepared with a lock of her own hair enclosed in it; and an inscription on it, 'Remember me when I am gone.' The Princess placed the ring herself on her father's finger. But the shock was too much for the old King. His former malady almost immediately returned. When he left his daughter's chamber, his mind was found to be perfectly deranged.

The anxiety, which this state of things occasioned to the Ministry, was necessarily great. The difficulty, which it created, was the greater from the circumstances of the moment. Parliament had been prorogued till the 1st November, but, as it had not been intended to assemble it so soon, the phrase about meeting for despatch of business had of course been omitted from the prorogation. Under these circumstances, immediately before the King's illness, an order in Council had, as usual, been agreed upon directing the Chancellor to prepare a Commission for the further prorogation of Parliament. The Commission had been prepared; but the King was too ill to sign it; and there was no precedent for such a commission passing the Great Seal without the King's signature. Under these circumstances, Perceval wrote, on the 29th October, to the Speaker to beg him to come to town, in case it should be necessary that the House should meet. The Speaker came at once;

the King, Perceval told him, was less irritable, but 'silly.' The Chancellor and Ryder were to go down to Windsor to judge whether he was competent to sign the Commission; and, in the event of his inability to do so, the Houses would meet on the 1st.

Perceval, besides writing to the Speaker, communicated also with Lords Sidmouth and Canning. Lord Sidmouth at once came to Ealing, and expressed himself 'desirous of doing everything that could be useful on the occasion.' Canning, also, sent a warm acknowledgment of Perceval's letter.

Lord Eldon and Ryder found the King so ill that it was obviously impossible to dream of obtaining his signature to the Commission. Parliament accordingly was compelled to meet on the 1st November. Perceval stated the circumstances under which it had met, and proposed an adjournment for a fortnight.[1] Sheridan concurred and seconded the Motion, which was unanimously agreed to. The bulletins of the next few days were a little more favourable. The King was 'much the same' on the 2nd; 'had passed a better night' on the 3rd; 'was in no respect worse' on the 4th; and 'much better' on the 5th; but 'not better' on the 6th; 'fully as well' on the 7th; and though he had a relapse on the 8th, from which he partially rallied on the 9th, the physicians were able on the 10th to report him 'better than he had been for five or six days;' to state that he was

[1] Hansard, xviii. 6.

'still a little better' on the 11th; 'better on the whole than he has been since the commencement of his illness' on the 12th; and on the 14th, though he had some sleepless nights in the interval, His Majesty appeared to be 'in a state of progressive amendment.'

On the 15th, Parliament again met. Perceval was able to assure the House that a very considerable amendment had taken place in the King's health, and proposed another adjournment for a fortnight. Burdett, Sheridan, and Whitbread, opposed the adjournment on the ground of their being no Parliamentary foundation for such a motion, *for want of a document* to record upon the journals as the cause and inducement for it. But the Ministers were supported by a large majority, 343 votes to 58, and the House was again adjourned.[1]

The amendment, which had hitherto been gradually taking place in the King's health, now unfortunately ceased. The Princess Amelia, whose illness had been the immediate cause of her father's malady, had died on the 2nd November; she was buried on the 14th. On the 15th, the King was well enough to go through the Princess's affairs, remunerate her attendants, and arrange her effects. But the exertion was too much for him; he was more feverish on the 17th, and, though appearances were a little more favourable on the 18th, he had more

[1] Hansard, xviii. 42; Colchester, ii. 290.

fever on the 19th; and the bulletins of the 23rd, 24th, 25th, and 26th, were all unfavourable.[1]

Under these circumstances the Privy Council was summoned for the 28th. 'The attendance very full,' wrote George Rose, 'both of Members on the side of the Government and of the Opposition.' The physicians were called in and examined; they 'all spoke with confidence of the King's ultimate recovery, and to a very great amendment in his mental health within the last twenty-four hours.'[2] The Council met again on the following day, when another physician, Dr. Baillie, was examined, who corroborated the account which had already been given by Dr. Heberden and Sir Henry Halford. After the Council separated, Perceval had a meeting of his own supporters. He told them that he proposed to deliver in the Minutes of the Examination, and move another adjournment for a fortnight. To this proposal they unanimously agreed: but it was received with less unanimity in Parliament. Opposition was offered in both Houses. In the Lords the Government was supported by 88 votes to 56. In the Commons Perceval had a majority of 233 votes to 129, and the House again resolved to adjourn for another fortnight.[3]

The news, after the adjournment, was favourable. For the few first days the King continued to improve,

[1] Rose, ii. 455, &c.; Colchester, ii. 290, &c.
[2] Colchester, ii. 293.
[3] Hansard, xviii. 75 and 118.

and on the 4th and 5th he was surprisingly well. Ministers entertained no doubt of his holding a Council and proroguing Parliament. On the 6th, however, he had another relapse.[1] The accounts continued so indifferent that Perceval told the Speaker, on the 12th, that he could not justify another adjournment. When the House met on the following day, he accordingly proposed a Committee to examine the King's physicians; the motion was at once agreed to, and the House adjourned for four days more, or till the following Monday.[2]

The physicians gave the Committee much the same account which they had given three weeks before to the Privy Council. They still 'retained the same confident expectation of an *ultimate recovery*, but not so confident an opinion of its being *speedy*, in consequence of the relapses which had occurred since the first amendment.'[3] Dundas brought up the Report from the Committee on the Monday; and Perceval at once gave notice that on the following Thursday, in a Committee of the whole House, he should propose the resolutions which had been adopted on a similar occasion in 1788.[4]

The Resolutions, which had been adopted in 1788, were three in number. The first had been declaratory of the King's indisposition to attend to public business. The second had stated 'that it was the

[1] Colchester, ii. 296.
[2] Hansard, xviii. 127.
[3] Colchester, ii. 297.
[4] Hansard, xviii. 179.

duty of Parliament to provide the means of supplying this defect of the personal exercise of the Royal Authority.' The third, 'that for this purpose, and for maintaining the constitutional authority of the King, it was necessary that the said Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons of Great Britain, should determine on the means whereby the Royal Assent may be given in Parliament to such Bill as may be passed by the two Houses of Parliament, respecting the exercise of the powers and authorities of the Crown, in the name and on the behalf of the King during the continuance of His Majesty's indisposition.'[1]

Such were the Resolutions of 1788. On the expediency of the two first of them all parties were agreed; but Ponsonby, at once, gave notice of his intention strenuously to oppose the third. The Opposition contended in 1810, as they had insisted in 1788, that the proper mode of procedure was not by bill, but by address, and that the Prince of Wales should be invited to assume the Regency as an indefeasible right. Brougham, a hot political partisan at this time, adopted this view;[2] the whole Whig party committed themselves to it; the Princes of the blood were in favour of it; but the House, after agreeing to the other Resolutions, decided, as might have been anticipated, by a very large majority, 269 votes to 157, to follow the precedent of 1788, and to proceed by Bill.

[1] Colchester, ii. 298. [2] Autobiography, i. 510.

The Opposition were ignorant, when they determined to resist the mode of Procedure by Bill, of the restrictions which Perceval proposed to introduce into the measure. 'We shall have a compromise,' thought Brougham, 'very few restrictions, just enough to save the principle as it were.'[1] But Brougham misunderstood the character of the Minister with whom he had to deal. Perceval had determined to follow the precedent of 1788, and he was the last man living to assent to a compromise for the sake either of his own colleagues or of the Regent. He proposed that the Regent, while exercising the other functions of royalty, should be restricted (1), from making Peers, and (2), from granting offices in reversion or bestowing pensions;[2] that the King's private property should be vested in

[1] Autobiography, i. 512.

[2] Perceval's wrote to the Prince as follows:—

'*Downing Street*, 19*th Dec.* 1810.

'Sir,—The hopes, which His Majesty's confidential servants have from time to time entertained of the probability of His Majesty's recovery from his present indisposition, before it might become absolutely necessary to open to Parliament any measure for supplying the defect in the personal exercise of the royal authority; the extreme delicacy of proposing any measure for such a purpose at any time; and the persuasion that nothing could warrant the proposing it at all, unless absolute necessity should require it; have hitherto induced them to delay communicating to your Royal Highness the nature of that measure which they have felt that it would become their duty to propose in the event of the longer continuance of His Majesty's indisposition; and they humbly hope that your Royal Highness will be graciously pleased to approve of those considerations which have thus occasioned

trustees for His Majesty's benefit, and that the care of His Majesty's person, during his illness, should

this delay. As, however, it will be my painful and necessary duty to bring forward certain preliminary resolutions upon this subject in the Committee of the whole House on Thursday next, and upon that occasion to state, at least in general, the plan or outline of such measure, I am extremely desirous, in the respectful discharge of my humble duty to your Royal Highness, that your Royal Highness should be previously apprised of that plan by myself.

'Before I presume to enter into the statement of the measure, I think it necessary to request permission of your Royal Highness to state that His Majesty's Ministers have thought themselves bound to consider this question, not only upon its own grounds, but also with a necessary reference to what has passed upon a similar occasion before. The two Houses of Parliament appear to have sanctioned after great deliberation, in the years 1788 and 1789, the principle upon which such a measure should proceed. There is, indeed, a material distinction which must present itself in the consideration of His Majesty's indisposition between that time and the present. The subsequent experience of the nature and dura tion of this complaint in His Majesty seems necessarily to lead to a more confirmed expectation of recovery, at no distant period, than what either was felt or could have been felt by Parliament at that time; and His Majesty's servants have therefore thought themselves bound to regulate the proceedings they are to propose with a view to that circumstance. If, unhappily, the ardent hopes and prayers of His Majesty's subjects should be disappointed, and the continuance of His Majesty's indisposition be protracted to a more distant period, those particular provisions, which are introduced in the hope and contemplation of a short continuance of the indisposition, may reasonably be permitted to cease. What the precise period of that continuance may be there seem to be no sufficient grounds to determine or to conjecture. The limit of three years, which was introduced with respect to the only restriction to which any limit was affixed in the former Bill, seems to His Majesty's servants too extended under the present circumstances; but it has occurred to them that the period of about one twelvemonth, from the time of the passing of the Act, would be a proper and reasonable limit to be proposed to any restrictions which Parliament may think

be entrusted to the Queen, who should have a Council appointed to assist her in this duty. Per-

necessary to impose upon the exercise of any part of the royal prerogatives: provided, nevertheless, that sufficient care should be taken that, before the expiration of such restrictions, Parliament shall necessarily have been sitting for six weeks, and consequently shall have had the opportunity of reconsidering the subject.

'I beg leave, further, to state to your Royal Highness that it is the humble opinion of His Majesty's servants that it will be their duty to submit to the two Houses of Parliament a Bill to empower your Royal Highness to exercise the Royal authority, in the name and in behalf of His Majesty, during His Majesty's illness; and in general to do all acts which might legally be done by His Majesty. That such Bill should contain provisions that the custody of His Majesty's royal person should be committed to the Queen, and that Her Majesty should be assisted in the discharge of the important duties connected with that trust by a Council, the appointment of which should be regulated by the Bill; and that in this Bill should also be specified the provisions by which the restoration of His Majesty's health should be notified, and the manner of His resuming the exercise of the royal authority be pointed out.

'That these several provisions, relating to the authority of your Royal Highness, as well as those to the custody of His Majesty's person, and to the restoration of His Majesty to the personal exercise of his authority should have no limit in point of time prescribed to them, it being intended that they should last during the whole period of His Majesty's indisposition.

'That the management of the whole of His Majesty's household, and the power of appointing the officers and servants of that establishment, should, in the first instance, be entrusted to Her Majesty, but that this provision should only continue about the space of one year from the passing of the Act. As, however, it will be necessary, in the event of the discontinuance of Her Majesty's power over the household, that Her Majesty should retain, by reason of the custody of His Majesty's person still continuing in Her Majesty, some such portion of the household establishment as shall seem to be more immediately required for the royal dignity and personal comfort of His Majesty, the

ceval communicated these intended limitations to the Prince of Wales on the morning of the 19th

termination of this power should be so connected with a sitting of Parliament as to secure the full opportunity of making some fresh arrangements upon that point before that termination shall take place.

'That such personal property of His Majesty as may not now be vested in trustees for His Majesty's use should be vested in trustees to be appointed in the Bill. That Her Majesty, your Royal Highness, and such other persons, as may be pointed out in the Bill, should be such trustees; and that the trust for His Majesty's use should be subject to His Majesty's disposition by his deed or will; and, in the event of His Majesty's demise without a will, should be distributed according to law.

'That, although your Royal Highness should have full power to grant in possession for life, or for good behaviour, all such offices as must by law be granted for such terms, yet, with respect to all other offices and all pensions which may be legally granted by His Majesty, your Royal Highness's power should, during the period of the limitation already described, extend only to the granting them during the time of the Regency, and subject, as to their further continuance, to the subsequent pleasure of His Majesty; but that after the time so limited all such restrictions upon this power shall cease.

'That the prerogative of granting any rank or dignity of peerage should not be exercised by your Royal Highness till the expiration of the same period, except in favour of any person who shall achieve any signal naval or military service.

'These are the principal points, and this is the leading outline of the measure which it appears to His Majesty's Ministers that it will be their duty to propose in the present circumstances. They humbly beg permission to add that, in suggesting such limitations on the Royal authority in your Royal Highness's hands, they have acted according to the principle which had upon the occasion referred to received the full and complete sanction of both Houses of Parliament, and which was then, upon so much consideration, adopted as necessary, upon general grounds, for preserving to the Sovereign on the throne the splendour necessary to His Majesty's

December. The Prince, on the receipt of the letter, took the unusual course of assembling 'the

royal station as long as the hopes of his recovery at no distant period should be entertained, and for making due provision for the resumption of his authority in the event of his happy recovery. They beg leave further humbly to represent that, by proposing to limit the continuance of these several restrictions and provisions to a period so much shorter than what was then proposed with respect to any one of them, they trust they will appear to your Royal Highness to have paid due regard to those circumstances which distinguish the present case from that which then existed, and to have provided for the full exercise of the powers of the Crown in the hands of your Royal Highness, at as early a period and with as few limitations during the interval, as is consistent with those principles which the two Houses of Parliament appear to be bound to attend to in the awful discharge of that sacred trust which this great national calamity has devolved upon them: considering this trust with reference to what is due to His Majesty's royal authority, to your Royal Highness, who has so great an interest in the preservation of that authority, and to the whole nation, whose liberties and happiness depend upon it. The two Houses of Parliament can only, in the humble opinion of His Majesty's servants, discharge that trust on such general principles as shall be safely applicable at all times; but they humbly hope that your Royal Highness's condescension and goodness will do them the justice to believe that, in their most arduous and responsible situations, and in a case surrounded with such difficulties, and embarrassed with such conflicting duties, though their primary object has been a due attention to these duties, they have endeavoured to discharge them, to the best of their humble judgment, with every possible regard and respect for the feelings, as well as the interests, of the illustrious personages concerned in them.

'In opening thus fully the outline of the plan intended to be proposed, and in alluding thus generally to the reasons which have influenced His Majesty's servants in adopting it, I trust I have put your Royal Highness in as complete possession of it as your Royal Highness could at this time require. It remains only for me to express my readiness to obey your Royal Highness's

whole of the male branches of the Royal Family' at his house, 'and persuading them to unite in a solemn

commands, by attending in person at any time with any further explanation your Royal Highness may condescend to require.

'I have the honour to be,

'With the utmost deference and submission,

'Your R. H.'s most dutiful and devoted servant,

'(Signed) SP. PERCEVAL.'

The Prince answered as follows:—

'The Prince acknowledges the receipt of Mr. Perceval's detailed statement of those measures which, Mr. Perceval informs him, His Majesty's confidential servants have decided to submit to the Lords and Commons now assembled, as the means of providing for the exercise of the royal authority, should the King's indisposition unhappily be protracted.

'The Prince, though fully sensible of the attention of this early communication, cannot but in some degree feel embarrassed by it, inasmuch as it rests not with him to judge, nor does he deem himself entitled to assume, how far the wisdom of the two Houses of Parliament may think it advisable for the public welfare to adopt the plan communicated by Mr. Perceval. Were it not for this difficulty, the Prince would refer Mr. Perceval to the Prince's answer to Mr. Pitt's letter on the 30th of December, 1788, that letter containing the outlines of the plan intended then to be acted upon by His Majesty's confidential servants. But the Prince thinks it essential to observe that that communication was not made by Mr. Pitt till after the two Houses of Parliament had come to certain resolutions as the groundwork of that plan. That answer remains on record, and, as the sentiments contained in it were founded on a solemn contemplation of the principles of the British Constitution, as well as an earnest desire to be able conscientiously to discharge the functions of government in behalf of his beloved and revered father and sovereign, in such a manner as might best satisfy His Majesty's well-known and constant anxiety for the advantage and honour of his people, the Prince has only to declare that these sentiments admit of no change.

'The Prince cannot conclude without expressing his deep

protest to the Minister against the proposed limitations to his authority.'[1]

Perceval sent a civil answer to the protest;[2] but

affliction at the melancholy event which has rendered his communication from Mr. Perceval necessary, and without declaring that it will be the happiest moment of the Prince's life to be enabled, by the restoration of His Majesty's health, instantly to deposit at his feet those powers (and he trusts unimpaired) which the Constitution has pronounced to be inseparable from the exercise of the royal authority.

'*Carlton House, Wednesday Evening,*
'*December* 19, 1810.'

(1) '*Carlton House, Wednesday night,* 12 *o'clock,*
'*December* 19, 1810.

'SIR,—The Prince of Wales having assembled the whole of the male branches of the Royal Family, and having communicated to us the plan, intended to be proposed by His Majesty's confidential servants to the Lords and Commons, for the establishment of a restricted Regency, should the continuance of His Majesty's ever-to-be-deplored illness render it necessary, we feel it a duty we owe to His Majesty, to our country, and to ourselves, to enter our solemn protest against measures that we consider as perfectly unconstitutional, as they are contrary to, and subversive of, the principles which seated our family upon the throne of these realms.

'FREDERICK, 'WILLIAM,
'EDWARD, 'ERNEST,
'AUGUSTUS FREDERICK, 'ADOLPHUS FREDERICK,
'WILLIAM FREDERICK.'

(2) '*To His Royal Highness the Duke of York.*

'Mr. Perceval has the honour of acknowledging the receipt of a solemn protest, in the name of the male branches of the Royal Family, against the measures which His Majesty's confidential servants have thought it to be their duty to communicate to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales as intended to be proposed to

he never moved from his purpose, and, on the last day of the year, he rose in a Committee of the whole House to explain his proposals. The struggle which then ensued was so remarkable that it is worth while considering for a moment the state of things at the commencement of it. The King was hopelessly ill, the prospect of his recovery so remote that

the two Houses of Parliament for the establishment of the restricted Regency during the continuance of His Majesty's ever-to-be-lamented indisposition, and stating that their Royal Highnesses consider these measures as perfectly unconstitutional, and contrary to, and subversive of the principles which seated His Majesty's royal family upon the throne of this realm. Mr. Perceval has felt it to be his duty to submit this communication, without loss of time, to His Majesty's servants; and, deeply as they lament that the measure which they have thought themselves bound to propose should appear to their Royal Highnesses to deserve a character so directly contrary to that which it has been their anxious endeavour should belong to it, they must still, however, have the consolation of reflecting that the principles upon which they have acted obtained the express and concurrent support of the two Houses of Parliament in the years 1788 and 1789. That those Houses of Parliament had the high satisfaction of receiving, by the command of His Majesty, after His Majesty's recovery, his warmest acknowledgments for the additional proofs they had given of their affectionate attachment to his person, and of their zealous concern for the honour and interests of his crown, and the security and good government of his dominions, and that the uninterrupted confidence, which His Majesty was pleased to repose for a long series of years in the persons who proposed the measures which were grounded on these principles, entitles His Majesty's servants, in their judgments, still further to conclude that those principles and measures had the sanction of his royal approbation.

'*Downing Street,*
'*December* 28, 1810.'

it was hardly worth while reckoning on it. The heir-apparent to the monarchy, the Regent-designate, was the firm friend of the Whig opposition, and the violent, indecently violent, enemy of the Minister. The Minister who was thus distasteful to the future Regent, probably the future King, was at the head of a party which was always liable, by the defection of Canning or Sidmouth, to be placed in a minority. Whatever decision then the House formed on the immediate point at issue, nothing seemed more certain than that the inauguration of the Regency would synchronize with a change of Government. That numerous section, therefore, of politicians whose eyes are constantly fixed on the political barometer, and who regulate their votes with its rise and fall, was ready to cross over from the Minister that was falling, to the Ministry of the immediate future. The causes thus acted and reacted on each other. The prospect of a change of Government increased the chances of defeat. The probability of defeat made a change of Government more likely. Under such circumstances there was consternation among the 'ins;' excitement among the 'outs.' 'We are, all, I think, on *the kick and the go*, but have probably a month to run,' wrote Lord Palmerston to his sister. 'They all look d——d miserable, the Chancellor in particular,' said Lord Brougham of the Ministers in the House of Lords the day before.

Such was the state of things on the eve of the Regency debates. Perceval moved the five resolu-

tions on which the Regency Bill was to be founded. The first declared that it was expedient that the Prince of Wales, during the continuance of the King's illness, should be empowered to exercise the royal authority, subject to such limitations and exceptions as shall be provided; the second precluded him from making peers; the third, from granting pensions and offices in reversion; the fourth vested the King's private property in trustees for His Majesty's benefit; and the fifth confided the care of the King's person to the Queen and a council. Lambe, better known to this generation as Lord Melbourne, proposed to amend the first resolution, by omitting the final words in respect to restrictions. Canning, who had consulted the political barometer, argued in the same sense; but, notwithstanding this defection, the Minister had a majority of 224 to 200. The second resolution was then carried by 226 votes to 210; the third by 233 votes to 214; the fourth was agreed to without a division; and, at half-past twelve o'clock, when the new year was half an hour old, the House adjourned.[1] 'Opposition all elate,' wrote Ward the next day, 'with last night's division, and sure of

[1] Hansard, xviii. 348. Lord Colchester says that the second and third divisions were both on the Peerages (ii. 301); but he, or his editor, is clearly mistaken.

'Perceval addressed the following note to the Duke of Cumberland:—

'Mr. Perceval presents his humble duty to your Royal Highness, and is sensible that he is taking a great liberty, but trusts that your Royal Highness will have the goodness and condescension to forgive his intruding upon you this note.

beating us to-night. Few of them at Brooks's, as the leaders went immediately after the debate to Carlton House. We are told already of arrangements,

'Mr. Perceval has felt much in doubt whether he ought not to have communicated to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales the result of the debate last night in the House of Commons on his motion. But Mr. Perceval conceived upon the whole that, as that event was unfavourable to what he had with great concern understood to have been, in His Royal Highness's opinion, the more desirable conclusion of it, Mr. Perceval was afraid that the communication might have been misunderstood as rather failing in the respect it would have been intended to mark, than as paying it. Mr. Perceval, therefore, hopes that your Royal Highness, if you should find that His Royal Highness conceives that Mr. Perceval has been deficient in his duty by not communicating to him the result of last night's debate, will have the goodness to take some opportunity of explaining to His Royal Highness the motive which induced him to withhold it.'

The Prince answered in the following letter:—

'*St. James's*,
'*Friday Evening*, 6 *o'Clock.*

'DEAR PERCEVAL,—I received your note on my return home, and lost no time in communicating its contents to the Prince, who desires me to say that he could not for a single instant have construed your silence of the event of last night as anything personal to himself, but to the very reasons you give in your note.

'Having now communicated to you what was necessary, in answer to your note, permit me to add a few lines from myself, to say that, however deeply I may deplore that upon any public question I should differ with those with whom I have acted, I trust not only *most cordially*, but most *faithfully* and *honourably*, in spite of all the lies put about, still I hope that this may be the *only instance*, and that it may be permitted me to keep up the same footing of friendship between us that has now for *some years* existed. At least knowing you as well as I do, I am sure you will

but all mere talk. Whitbread to be Foreign Secretary and negotiate a peace.' Ward himself had been unavoidably absent from the division. 'Wrote a note to Perceval to explain my absence last night. I was uneasy at it, considering the times, particularly as Lord Lowther was with me, and I knew the interpretation it might receive.' Perceval answered very characteristically in these lines :—

'"Dear Ward,—I feel much obliged to you for taking the trouble of explaining the cause of your absence last night, which, however, I assure you, was perfectly unnecessary. I only wish I could flatter myself that I had twenty such good friends as you in the same predicament."'[1]

The struggle was renewed on the first day of the new year. Perceval, in a short speech, moved the fifth resolution confiding to the Queen the custody of the King's person, and authorising her 'to appoint such persons as she shall think proper to the several offices in His Majesty's household.' Lord Gower, on the part of the Opposition, moved an amendment to the effect that the Queen shall have 'such direction of his household as may be suitable for the cares of His Majesty's royal person, and the maintenance of the

give me the same credit for the purity of my principles as I do most fully to yours.

'Believe me,
'Dear Perceval,
'Yours very sincerely,
'ERNEST.'

[1] Plumer Ward, i. 299.

royal dignity.' The Minister, in short, wished to entrust the Queen, during the King's illness, with the appointment of the whole household. The Opposition desired to give her a bare control over that portion of it which was left to His Majesty. Canning again deserted the Minister. 'Castlereagh, Wilberforce, and some saints,' did so too. The numerous defections swelled the numbers of the Opposition, and they succeeded in defeating the Government by 226 votes to 213.[1]

'Canning spoke again,' wrote Plumer Ward of the debate, 'and still more heavily than last night: not a single flash of wit, but a dull and laboured argument, in which he was wrong from beginning to end. Perceval, although he had a headache, answered him in his full style of manliness, and beat him to pieces; showed that he even mistook his own principles and Lord Gower's amendment altogether. Many struck with his marked superiority; Rose among the rest. Several members observed that when they come to be opposed in earnest he will rise far above him. He did so beyond comparison when Attorney-General under Addington. It was pleasant to observe the opinions as to Perceval in the House. Many country gentlemen told me they disagreed with him on the resolution, and knew he would be beaten, but devoted themselves to him on account of his manly firmness, his integrity, honour, and courage. I observed to some of the Grenville people, when he went out, that he was a true *game cock;* to which they all, and with great marks of approbation, assented. It is pleasant, if you must fall, to fall with such a leader, in such a cause.'

'Rose,' he goes on a little later, 'owned that he was

[1] Hansard, xviii. 598.

quite a proselyte to Perceval's superiority. He said that on the change last year he had come up to town with the full intention of resigning his office, thinking that Canning, by his abilities and the friendship he had enjoyed with him, was most likely to keep Mr. Pitt's friends together; but that, on seeing the correspondence with Perceval, he found it quite impossible to go with him; that he was delighted to see the latter progressively rising higher and higher in the estimation of everybody.'

'Lord Kenyon,' he adds a little later, 'warm in Perceval's praise.'

'Met the Duke of Montrose at the Palace,' he writes the next morning, 'who observed we did not shine the night before. I said, "Not in members." He asked in what else? I told him in Perceval's superiority in argument, courage, and rectitude. He allowed that, he said, and added that his reputation was spreading everywhere.'

But, though the Minister's reputation was spreading, his difficulties were increasing. All the royal princes were canvassing against him, and were using the King's name to defeat the policy which the King, in good health, would have certainly supported. 'I do not think there are many rats,' said Perceval cheerily, 'only a few mice.' But parties were so evenly balanced that the mice were sufficient to turn the scale. The contest, which had raged on the 1st of January, was renewed on the 2nd, on the report of the resolutions. The Ministry endeavoured to restore the fifth resolution to its original form. The debate was a remarkable one.

'Perceval, who had distinguished himself in every part

of the subject already, left it to Ryder and Yorke, and did not speak.'[1]

'Sad quarrelling work,' wrote Wilberforce in his Diary; 'Sheridan's long speech, two-thirds tipsy, dealing about knocks on all sides (after Sir William Grant, who quite capital). Heartily wished to lose, but upon constitutional principles voted for amendment,[2] which was carried by 217 to 214. Had been carried last night, but moved again by Perceval.'

A very different debate arose on the following day. Lord Grenville, as auditor of the Exchequer, had refused to allow money to be issued for the current service of Government, without the usual authority under the Privy Seal and Sign-Manual. The Attorney and Solicitor-General supported Lord Grenville's view, and the interposition of Parliament became consequently necessary to enable the current service of the Government to be carried on. Perceval, on the 3rd of January, presented the correspondence which he had had with Lord Grenville on the subject; and, on the following day, proposed in Committee

[1] Plumer Ward, i. 306.

[2] As a matter of fact, Wilberforce voted for the fifth resolution as amended, and against the amendment; but his mistake is slight compared with that of his contemporaries. The Speaker, or his editor, makes the majority one of 4, not of 3 (217 to 213, in lieu of 217 to 214). But Rose is far worse: he roundly asserts that the majority was the other way, or *for* instead of *against* the Ministry; and his editor makes the date the 22nd instead of 2nd of January. It is, no doubt, a very difficult thing to be perfectly accurate in a political memoir; but, in such details as these, inaccuracy is inexcusable. (Wilberforce, iii. 491; Colchester, ii. 302; Rose, ii. 464; Cfr. Hansard, xviii. 673.)

that the 'Treasury should be required to issue their warrants to the auditor of the Exchequer for the payment of such sums as the exigency may render necessary; and that the said auditor is authorised and commanded to pay obedience to the warrant in this behalf.' A debate of some length ensued; the Opposition insisted that 'the ministers should have taken the responsibility upon themselves without coming to Parliament.' But Perceval's resolution was ultimately agreed to without a division.[1]

The debate had been unfortunate for Lord Grenville, because it had reminded everyone of the circumstances of his Premiership in 1806. Then he had endeavoured to be auditor of the Exchequer and First Lord of the Treasury at the same time; now he was contending that the one office was a check on the other. The inconsistency was the more noticed from the conduct his Lordship was pursuing in the House of Lords. Never was public man placed in a more painful position than Lord Grenville in 1811. His whole party were dead against restrictions; but their leader, Lord Grenville, had not only spoken in favour of them in 1789, but had republished his speech. 'Oh, that my friend had not written a book!' said Sheridan. Lord Grenville must have regretted his book at least as much as Sheridan. When the resolutions were brought up to the Lords, Lord Lansdowne proposed to omit the reference to restric-

[1] Hansard, xviii. 783; Rose, ii. 466.

tions and limitations in the first. Lord Grenville supported him to the utmost, and Government were defeated by a majority of 3; 105 votes to 102. But, on the Peerage resolution, he turned round, voted for the restrictions against his own friends, and gave the ministers a majority of 6; 106 to 100. 'D—n him,' said Lord S., 'after the worst speech that was ever made to pave the way for inconsistency, to on a sudden leave us for the sake of consistency, and ruin the whole game.'[1] The resolutions were now agreed to by both Houses. Deputations on Perceval's motion were appointed to wait on the Regent and the Queen. The formal answers to the addresses to the Commons were delivered by His Royal Highness and Her Majesty. The Lords, on the 14th, 'sent down the resolutions for a Commission to pass the great Seal for opening the session,[2] to which the House of Commons agreed, after one speech of splash from Sheridan, well answered by Perceval,' and the session of 1811 commenced. 'Sheridan's speech wretched, and Perceval's excellent,' wrote Wilberforce. 'Yet, as on the other evening, all the newspapers make a capital speech for Sheridan, and extol his eloquence.'[3]

[1] Plumer Ward, i. 317. Ward does not give Lord S.'s name.

[2] Colchester, ii. 307. The Speaker's editor, by a curious mistake, has made his father write *Sessions*, and has made nonsense of the sentence.

[3] Diary, iii. 491.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SESSION OF 1811.

1811.

Perceval's Increasing Reputation — Health of the King — Speculations on a Change of Government—State of Parties—Retention of Tories in Office — The Regency Bill — Sentiments of the Opposition — Extraordinary Change in the Opinions of the Prince of Wales — Letter from the Prince Regent, and Mr. Perceval's Reply — Meeting of Parliament—War in Spain — Great Efforts of England—Commercial Paralysis—Discussions on the Currency — Debate on Horner's Bullion Report — Vansittart's Resolutions — The Gold Coin Bill — Debate on the Grant to W. Palmer.

THE events of the preceding month had increased Perceval's reputation in an extraordinary degree. His pluck and dexterity had gained him a host of friends. Even his enemies admired the undaunted resolution with which he was carrying on the battle. 'Greenhill dined with me,' wrote Ward on the 7th January. 'He is red-hot on the other side,' but 'he adores Perceval.' 'Long,' he says a little further on, on the same day, 'cordially agreed with me in opinion of Perceval's superior merits, of his increased reputation, and on the pleasure it was to have such a leader in such a cause. He said that, like Rose, in

the original separation between him and Canning, he had inclined to think the latter would have been the stronger of the two as premier . . . but he *thought himself now entirely mistaken upon the comparative merits of the two men.*' 'I remember asking Lord Temple,' Ward wrote the next day, 'if he did not give Perceval his respect; to which he said he was obliged to do, for the stand he had made; but that he ought to be impeached for leaving the royal authority so long vacant.' 'M. A. Taylor,' he writes on the 11th, 'amused me in talking of Perceval; he was the best creature, he said, and had shown great ability and great courage, but was so wrong in his conduct he was sorry for it.' 'To-day I met Lord Kensington,' he writes next day. 'Though it rained hard, he stopped to say abruptly enough,—"Well, whether you are out or in, my respect and approbation will always follow Perceval; he has shown himself game, and fought like a gentleman, so we all say!"'[1] Wilberforce summed it up more concisely. 'All acknowledge the talent, integrity, good-humour, and various excellencies of Perceval through all the conduct of this difficult business. His colleagues don't help him at all.'[2] 'Throughout the whole of the debate—in every stage of the Regency business, from the first introduction of it,' wrote Rose, 'Mr. Perceval has conducted himself with a degree of talent, manliness, temper, and perseverance, equal to

[1] Plumer Ward, i. 319, 321, 326, 330. [2] iii. 493.

anything I ever witnessed in Parliament, except that in eloquence he fell somewhat short of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox; but upon the whole, combining *all points*, I am bound to acknowledge that I think Mr. Pitt, if he had been living, could hardly have produced more complete effect. Mr. Perceval's ability and his conduct in all respects have forced from his enemies an applause and approbation hardly ever bestowed by political adversaries; and I am very much mistaken if the Regent will not find it necessary to resort to him for protection against his intended Ministers before two years elapse. I think I have given a long period.'

In one point matters were slowly changing in Perceval's favour. The immediate subject of the contention, the King, was better. The bulletins were more favourable, and, singularly enough, the private accounts were more favourable than the bulletins. 'So the King,' said Fremantle to Ward, 'means to put an end to all our discussions and arrangements by getting well.' 'In the House to-day,' Ward had previously written on the 8th, 'Sir George Warrender, a good-natured man, though strong in opposition, said to me he rejoiced in the King's amended state of health, if only because it would disappoint the rats, whom the crisis had discovered to Perceval, who had fought nobly, and had all his respect.'[1] But, notwithstanding the amend-

[1] Plumer Ward, i. 321.

ment in the King's health, a change of Government seemed imminent. 'The Prince had determined,' said Romilly, 'the moment he should have entered upon his office, to have changed the administration, and a new Ministry has been arranged. Lord Grenville was to have been First Lord of the Treasury; Lord Holland, First Lord of the Admiralty; Lord Grey, Ponsonby, and Whitbread, Secretaries of State; Lord Erskine, Speaker of the House of Lords; and the Great Seal was to have been put in commission. Piggott and I were to have had our former offices of Attorney and Solicitor-General.'[1] Wilberforce recorded another rumour; 'Lord Grey to be First Lord of the Treasury.'[2] Ward mentioned a third, that Lord Chatham was to have office; nay, to be Premier.'[3] The Speaker a fourth; 'The current rumour,' he wrote on the 15th, 'is of a difficulty between appointing Lord Fitzwilliam or Lord Holland to be the Prime Minister.'[4] Everyone, in short, speculated on a change. What the change would be, no one precisely knew.

These conflicting rumours had been partly encouraged by the conduct of the Prince himself. If we may follow Rose, who gives perhaps the best account of what occurred, Lord Grey agreed to accept the situation of First Lord of the Treasury, on the express condition that His Royal Highness should consult only *his Ministers*, excluding thereby

[1] Romilly, ii. 365.
[2] Wilberforce, iii. 492.
[3] Ward, i. 325.
[4] Colchester, ii. 307.

Lord Moira and Mr. Sheridan even *from that time* before he assumed the Regency.[1] The Prince showed his sense of the condition by rejecting the draft answer to the address of the Houses, which had been prepared by Lords Grey and Grenville, and substituting for it another which had been drawn up by Sheridan. Lords Grey and Grenville remonstrated; the Prince sent their remonstrance to Sheridan; and the breach commenced which ultimately led to the retention of the Tories in office.[2]

Such was the state of parties and position of public men on the 15th January. On that evening Perceval obtained leave to introduce the Regency Bill; and the Bill was read a first time.[3] Ward 'walked home with Perceval from the House. I told him, with unfeigned regard and pleasure, the various things said of him by all parties, and congratulated him on the spreading of his fame. I said, as he was going out, I might do this without any gross flattery. I mentioned (what my City friends enabled me to know) the high opinion of him there entertained, as a worthy successor of Mr. Pitt. He replied, in all that unaffected simplicity of heart and manner that belongs so peculiarly to him, that, though he could not fail being pleased with all that

[1] Rose, ii. 473.

[2] 'Court of England during the Regency,' i. 20. The Duke of Buckingham says this intrigue took place 'as soon as the Regency Bill had passed.' It, on the contrary, occurred before it had been brought in.

[3] Hansard, xviii. 851; Colchester, ii. 307.

his friends told him, he really could not help wondering that anything he had done should be thought so praiseworthy; that what he had to do was the merest plain-sailing in the world; his duty had no difficulties; he spoke from a brief (meaning Mr. Pitt's brief).'[1] The next day the Regency Bill was read a second time; on the 17th the House went into Committee on it. 'Division on limiting the Peerage restrictions to six months (instead of a year). For six months, 160; for the year, 184. Three other divisions took place on the Household Clause, 209 *v.* 187; 204 *v.* 177; 202 *v.* 180.'[1] 'They attempted,' wrote Ward, 'to reduce the time of the restrictions to six months; but we beat them hollow. It is amazing how Perceval fights. He was more forcible than ever, and beat Canning and Tierney out of the field. The latter, who had most attacked him, was even humbled; and in reply observed that he had made one of Pitt's speeches. . . . The superiority he has assumed and keeps is confessed by everyone; by none more than the Opposition, some of whom (the younger men), as Sir George Warrender and Brand, even cheered him. Our majority increases, and all attributed to him, though they complain he is so ill seconded. Upon the Household questions, which it was expected we should lose, all remained firm; and, after three unsuccessful divisions, they let us adjourn, though delay is death to them.'

'Lord Temple,' he goes on, 'was very gloomy all

[1] Colchester, ii. 308.

night; to cheer him, while standing with Fremantle in the waiting-room, I asked what he thought of Perceval. He smiled, but did not much like the question, and attempted to squib. Fremantle, however, allowed Perceval a most determined and gallant fighter, and particularly powerful that night. He has besides, said he, a most determined steady crew, who will follow him through anything, even worse than this. I said it was all owing to his personal character, which attached everybody to him, and the extraordinary ability which he had shown, which made that attachment an honour. Fremantle allowed it, and confessed we had beaten them to-night. This was, however, the universal sentiment in the course of the evening.' 'Lord Lowther and J. Robinson dined with me,' he writes next day; 'in the highest spirits possible at the following and loud support which Perceval received last night, and the total overthrow of his opponents in argument and eloquence.'[1]

On the following day the Committee resumed their labours. 'Every point,' said Rose, 'has been carried in the progress of the Bill by Ministers.' 'Not a division, and scarce a struggle,' wrote Ward. 'Perceval accused by Whitbread of being dazzled by prosperity. Exceedingly good this to a Minister supposed to be going out, and a full proof of his recent victories.' 'Fremantle said,' he goes on, 'half jesting, half in earnest, they had settled the Govern-

[1] Plumer Ward, i. 336, 337, 338.

ment; but, added he, after last night's demonstration of such confidence in Perceval, we must, in our own defence, dissolve the Parliament.' 'Dined at Manners Sutton's,' he goes on the next day; 'everybody as usual enthusiasts in favour of Perceval. Sutton said what was very true, "This crisis will now make the world understand and approve Perceval as those only who know him have hitherto done."' After dinner Ward seems to have gone to a party at Lady Bathurst's. 'Mr. Bragge-Bathurst had given them an account of Perceval's great superiority lately in the House. He said his following and applauses were equal to what he had known in Mr. Pitt's time. C. Adams (Lord Sidmouth's connexion), whom I joined in the Park; spoke the same language; he said he seemed to rise with every difficulty. He had sometimes opposed him, but he possessed all his admiration.' The following day Ward dined with Lord Mulgrave. 'Lords Palmerston, Clive, and Lowther, Long, Pole, General Phipps, and Holmes. The talk wholly political and on the times. What I observed was the union, founded upon esteem of individuals and a general sense of right, which seemed to pervade all. Whatever happened, all, for themselves (and in opinion for their friends) hoped and expected to keep together. Enthusiastic for such a leader as Perceval. . . . Long took me home. He remarked on the pleasure it was to see so many well-conditioned men all united together, *toto corde*, in consequence of their cause, and of

their love and esteem for their leader; and that Perceval's character would do wonders in the House; and that it was a pleasure as well as honour to follow him out of office."[1]

The Bill was reported on Monday, the 21st January. The House was again divided — the Speaker tells us by the Prince's orders, and against the wishes of the Whig leaders—on the Household Clause. But the Minister had a large majority. 'The House,' as Plumer Ward said, 'adhere to Perceval. We beat them by 212 to 190.'[2] But 'the remarkable part of the evening' for Ward, 'was a conversation with Brand, who came over to sit by me. Though he had spoken, and strongly, against us in the debate, he opened immediately upon the merits of Perceval; he admired his conduct and ability so much that, if he had ever given him a vote in his life, he said, he would have supported him on these questions; that his character had enabled him to commence the stand he had made, and character had attached his party so much to him as to continue the majority all through; that this sentiment was not peculiar to him in the Opposition, but partaken by many; indeed all, without exception, admired him; that this would give him extraordinary influence as the head of an Opposition which must give great trouble to the new Government when it was formed: nevertheless he thought we were not

[1] Rose, ii. 473; Plumer Ward, i. 338–343.
[2] Ib. 345; Colchester, ii. 309.

going out; it was too dangerous to come in; probably, he added laughing, the Regent will keep Perceval three months as his father's Minister, and then "fall so much in love with him" (that was the expression) that he will continue him as his own.'

Brand's conversation with Ward was in fact sufficiently remarkable. But far more remarkable were the circumstances under which the victory of the Monday was achieved. On the previous Thursday, the Opposition leaders had declared across the table that they should divide no more. On the strength of that understanding many of the country gentlemen had left town, when Ponsonby 'on the following day gave notice that he should take the sense of the House on the Monday following.' The Opposition, it seems, from Ward's account, broke their word to please their Prince. But, notwithstanding the breach of faith, the Minister had acquired instead of losing strength, and gained, under such disadvantages, a victory on the very point on which a month before he had been beaten on the substantive resolution.

On the following day the House was counted out; on the 23rd the third reading was passed; and the Bill was taken up to the Lords. On the 24th it was read a second time in that House. On the 25th it passed through Committee. On the 28th it was reported. On the 29th it was read a third time and passed. On the 2nd February the Great Seal was put to a Commission to pass it; and on the 4th

February it received the Royal Assent. The Bill, which had been brought in by a Minister in a minority, had passed substantially in its original form. No such other achievement can probably be found in the whole range of Parliamentary history.

What was thought in the House of Perceval's conduct of the matter has already been shown. Here is only one instance of what strangers to him out of the House thought of it.

'*Pal. Pet., Feb.* 10, 1811.

'Highly honoured Sir,—Although I have not the honour of being known to you, I can no longer refrain from pouring out the effusions of my heart in thanksgiving to you for your great and glorious services to my beloved sovereign and country. In the late important crisis, in which every member of the community has been so deeply and anxiously involved, you have proved yourself wise, and great, and good; and would to God every man in this country was as truly sensible of this as I am. You have uniformly and courageously trodden in the steps of the illustrious and immortal Pitt, whose memory I shall always revere—whilst memory holds her seat—and, therefore, I have always, since you (happily for this country) came to be the head of the present administration, warmly and invariably, according to my poor abilities, supported your measures; not from the least view of *interest, God knows!* but wholly upon conviction and principle. I am too far advanced in life (being now nearly eighty-two years of age) to solicit any favour. No, sir, I despise such a thought—*Macte, age virtute tuâ*—and I must sincerely and devoutly pray God to bless and prosper you in all your undertakings, which are so eminently and conspicuously shown to arise from your honourable and indefatigable pursuit after the public good.

'I have the honour to subscribe myself, with the highest deference, and most fervent gratitude,

'Great and good sir,

'Your ever highly obliged;

'And most obedient,

'Humble servant,

'Sp. Peterbro.'[1]

Such is one instance of the feeling which Perceval's exertions and success had excited both in Parliament and in the country.

Still the success of the Tories seemed the certain precursor of their fall. 'It seems to be decided to-day,' wrote Rose on the 31st January, 'that there is a fixed determination to change the Ministers after the Regency Bill shall pass.' 'By God! they shall not remain one hour,' had been the Prince's emphatic expression a week before. 'It was our own fault that we went,' said Sheridan; 'if we had not been so anxious about the d——d precedent of 1789, we might have remained in.'[2] There seemed to be no hope for the Government. But, on the very next day, the scene shifted; the Prince had changed his mind, and determined to continue the present administration.

The extraordinary alteration in the Prince's sentiments was probably partly attributable to the errors of the Whigs themselves. When Sheridan was in-

[1] The writer was, of course, Dr. Spencer Madan, the old Bishop of Peterborough. He died in the autumn of 1813.

[2] Rose, ii. 478; Plumer Ward, ii. 353, 371.

triguing against Lords Grey and Grenville, and the two Lords were delivering their ultimatum to His Royal Highness, there was little chance of any cordial understanding. But the Regent's views were more influenced still by another motive. The King's health had been long improving; and, towards the close of January, he was comparatively well again. On the 24th Perceval and Lord Eldon were able to see him; on the 26th they saw him again. On the 29th Perceval, in an hour's interview, gave him an account of the stirring events of the preceding month. On the 31st, at another interview, the King inquired whether it was the intention of the Prince to change the Government, and, on Lord Eldon's replying in the affirmative, 'His Majesty said, he would bring his present servants back.'[1] On the 1st the Queen wrote to her son to warn him of the ill effects which a change of Ministers might occasion to his father's health. The Duke of York was with his brother nearly all the day; and the latter in the evening 'sent to acquaint Lords Grey and Grenville, who were employed upon arrangements for a new administration, that it was not His Royal Highness's intention to make any change at present.'[2]

Three days elapsed before Perceval himself received any intimation of the Prince's change of opinion. On the 5th February Perceval received the following letter from the Prince:

[1] Rose, ii. 477. [2] Colchester, ii. 314.

'*Carlton House, Feb. 4th*, 1811.

'The Prince of Wales considers the moment to be arrived, which calls for his decision with respect to the persons to be employed in the administration of the executive Government of the country, according to the powers vested in him by the Bill passed by the two Houses of Parliament, and now on the point of receiving the sanction of the Great Seal.

'The Prince feels it incumbent on him, at this precise juncture, to communicate to Mr. Perceval his intention not to remove from their stations those whom he finds there as His Majesty's official servants. At the same time the Prince owes it to the truth and sincerity of his character, which he trusts will appear in every action of his life, in whatever situation placed, explicitly to declare that the irresistible impulse of filial duty and affection to his beloved and afflicted father leads him to dread that any act of the Regent might in the smallest degree have the effect of interfering with the progress of his Sovereign's recovery.

'This consideration alone dictates the decision now communicated to Mr. Perceval.'

'Having thus performed an act of indispensable duty from a just sense of what is due to his own consistency and honour, the Prince has only to add that, among the many blessings to be derived from His Majesty's restoration to health, and to the personal exercise of his royal functions, it will not, in the Prince's estimation, be the least that that fortunate event will at once rescue him from a situation of unexampled difficulty and embarrassment, and put an end to a state of affairs, ill calculated, he fears, to sustain the interests of the United Kingdom in this awful and perilous crisis, and most difficult to be reconciled to the genuine principles of the British Constitution.'

Perceval replied to this letter, the same day, as follows :—

'*Downing Street, Feb. 5th*, 1811.

'Mr. Perceval presents his humble duty to your Royal Highness, and has the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Royal Highness's letter of last night, which reached him this morning.

'Mr. Perceval feels it his duty to express his humble thanks to your Royal Highness for the frankness with which your Royal Highness has condescended explicitly to communicate the motives which have induced your Royal Highness to honour his colleagues and him with your commands for the continuance of their services in the stations intrusted to them by the King; and Mr. Perceval begs leave to assure your Royal Highness that, in the expression of your Royal Highness's sentiments of filial and loyal attachment to the King, and of anxiety for the speedy restoration of His Majesty's health, Mr. Perceval can see nothing but additional motives for their most anxious exertions to give satisfaction to your Royal Highness, in the only manner in which it can be given, by endeavouring to promote your Royal Highness's views for the security and happiness of the country.

'Mr. Perceval has never failed to regret the impression of your Royal Highness with regard to those provisions of the Regency Bill which His Majesty's servants felt it to be their duty to recommend to Parliament. But he ventures to submit to your Royal Highness his humble opinion that, whatever difficulties the present awful crisis of the country and the world may create in the administration of the executive Government, your Royal Highness will not find them in any degree increased by that temporary suspension of the exercise of those branches of the Royal prerogative, which has been introduced by Parliament, in conformity to what was intended on a former similar occasion. And that whatever ministers your Royal Highness might think proper to employ would find in that full support and countenance which, as

long as they were honoured with your Royal Highness's commands, they would feel confident that they would continue to enjoy, ample and sufficient means to enable your Royal Highness effectually to maintain the great and important interests of the United Kingdom.

'And Mr. Perceval humbly trusts that, whatever doubt your Royal Highness may entertain with respect to the constitutional propriety of the measures which have been adopted, your Royal Highness will feel assured that they would not have been recommended by His Majesty's servants, nor sanctioned by Parliament, but upon the sincere, though possibly erroneous, conviction that they in no degree trenched upon the true principles and spirit of this constitution.

'Mr. Perceval feels it his duty to add that he holds himself in readiness at any moment to wait upon your Royal Highness, and to receive any commands with which your Royal Highness may be graciously pleased to honour him.'

Thus ended this great contest in which a Minister, by ability, pluck, and honesty, had defeated a formidable opposition and a hostile Regent. A week after Perceval's letter to the Prince, on the 12th February, Parliament was formally opened.

The speech was, of course, prepared by Perceval, and seems to have met with approval from all parties. The Prince, when it was read to him, said 'it could not be better.' Plumer Ward calls it 'very wisely managed.'[1] The Address was agreed to without a division; but an animated debate rose the next day on report. Whitbread denounced the war policy of the Minister:—'Should even a brilliant and decisive victory be achieved, he could perceive but faint

[1] Colchester, ii. 321; Ward, i. 385.

hopes . . . . of the final rescue and deliverance of the Peninsula.'[1] 'Perceval took it up with his usual vigour,' and 'made a very spirited reply.' There was no division, and the first night of the new Session passed off.

Three days afterwards, the House was in Committee of Supply. Creevey made an attack on the Minister for granting 12,000*l.* to Lord Auckland and Lord Glenbervie. The grant had been made for surveying and valuing the Crown lands; but Creevey insisted that it was a concealed piece of favouritism. He was, however, 'beat all to pieces by Perceval, who declared that the grant had been contemplated by the last Administration. The Opposition cried No! No! Perceval, with great dignity, which seemed to impress the House, said it had been so distinctly stated to him in the House itself; but . . . that the justice of the claim was alone his guide. Wynne, who came in during this, confessed that it had been in the contemplation of the last Government to make the grant, and that he had allowed it on his legs in the House. . . . . This completed Perceval's triumph.' . . . 'What a wonderful creature he is!' said Fane of Oxfordshire to Ward, on the following day. Hunter dined with Ward that evening.[2] 'He is in politics what is called a croaker, and always takes the discontented side, though not at all a party-man. He was, however, to-day warm in praise of Perceval.' Twenty-four

[1] Hansard, xviii. 1197. [2] Plumer Ward, i. 391.

hours afterwards, 'Wilson, formerly the Chancellor's secretary, told me, in talking of Perceval, that he had made good the Chancellor's prophecy concerning him in 1806. I asked what that was. He said, "Upon our then going out, on Mr. Pitt's death, he had observed to the Chancellor, with whom he was very familiar, that we seemed to give it up very cowardly; upon which the Chancellor said, 'Why, there is but one man among us who could fight the battle, if he would [could?] be prevailed upon to leave his profession, and that is Perceval; but he is not even in the Cabinet now.'" Wilson separated from the Chancellor, being strong in opposition; he was, nevertheless, loud in the praise of Perceval, who, he said, he thought had put himself as high on the late occasion as Mr. Pitt.' 'Perceval,' Ward writes, two days afterwards, on the 20th, 'keeps all his following in the House, and on every subject makes Opposition feel.' On the 22nd, debates were raised in both Houses on a circular from the Irish Government, forbidding the nomination of persons to sit on 'an unlawful assembly,' called the 'Catholic Committee,' in Dublin, and ordering the lieutenants and sheriffs and magistrates to arrest any persons who published a notice of any such election. 'In the House,' wrote Ward, 'on the Irish question of Pole's letter, putting the Convention Act in force. We beat them by 80 to 43.... When they came in, Tierney asked me how many they were? When I said 43, he shook his head; and said, half laughing,

"Ah, I remember when we rolled out so fast you could not count us; but those merry days are over!" Talking with Fremantle to-night on the state of parties, Perceval then making a very able speech, I said, "Your friend, Lord Grenville, never made such a mistake [as] in passing by that man and Canning when he formed his Ministry in 1806. Had he not done this, he would have placed himself at the head of a Government as strong, and of as long continuance, as ever Pitt's was." He replied, "That might be very well to say *now that he had shown so much*, and, having been placed at the head, he had done well, and obtained a great following; but at the time nothing of this could have been known." I said, Lord Grenville ought to have known it, for no man had fought such battles, and shown such bottom, as Perceval, when Attorney-General, defending Addington; yet it was for Addington and his party, attacked by Lord Grenville and so defended by Perceval, that Lord Grenville made a sacrifice of this very Perceval. Fremantle said, "To be sure, that was a false step that cannot be defended;" and allowed that Perceval showed himself what he was immediately after he had been thus proscribed, and was the only man that could fight Fox.'[1]

The debate on the circular of the Irish Government, which had led to this conversation, had been

[1] Plumer Ward, i. 394.

interrupted by an unusual circumstance. Whitbread, in his reply to Perceval, said that the latter had given a bond, on his entrance into office, sealed with his honour, that he would never concede the Catholic claims. Perceval rose, and 'flatly contradicted' the statement. Whitbread shuffled; 'The former Ministry went out,' he explained, 'because they would not give such a bond. He (Perceval) came in, and it was of course to be inferred that he had entered into that stipulation for refusing to enter into which his predecessors had gone out.' Perceval again rose, and disclaimed having given any such pledge. Whitbread with difficulty secured another hearing; the House was uproarious; and the most uproarious member of it, Jack Fuller, the Member for Sussex, summed up the matter:—'When the hon. gentleman opposite (Whitbread) talked about his bond, and his sealing on honour, and things of that kind, all it came to in the end was supposing.'[1]

Ward's Diary, from which so many extracts have been quoted in the preceding pages, was interrupted soon after this date for ten months. The interruption makes it easier to consider the remaining events of the Session of 1811. Two, of far more importance than the rest, absorbed almost all the interest—the one, the war in Spain; the other, the commercial crisis through which the country was passing.

[1] Hansard, xix. 48, 49.

Massena, whose reputation was greater than that of any other of Napoleon's marshals, had been intrusted with the supreme command of the French Armies in the Peninsula. He had been given an enormous force with which to effect his object, and had undertaken to drive the English armies out of the Peninsula in three months. Ciudad Rodrigo surrendered to the French in July; Almeida late in August. In September, the French army was marching down the valley of the Mondego, while Wellington was quietly retiring before the invader. On the 26th September the British General made his stand at Busaco, and Massena wasted the best blood of his army in a useless attempt to storm a position which might easily have been turned. The victory gave Wellington time to organize his retreat. He had to arrange, not merely for the withdrawal of his own force, but for the evacuation by an entire population of a country. Driving the confused mass of the Portuguese before them, leaving in their rear a wasted province, the British army, early in October, entered the great lines of Torres Vedras, which the genius of their commander had created. Massena paused before the impregnable position, baffled and dismayed.

For five months Wellington and his allies remained in possession of their formidable position; for five months Massena and his dwindling army tarried on the outside. Master of the seas, Wellington was easily able to provide for the wants, not merely of

his own force, but of those of the vast population he had undertaken to protect. The health of the British Army was never better, its discipline was never more perfect, than in the winter of 1810–11. Lord only of an exhausted country, Massena, on the contrary, was unable to satisfy the wants of his huge force. The casualties of the campaign had already made some impression on its strength. Disease and want were making much greater inroads into it.

Napoleon, who was always ready with a plan for his discomfited generals, hit upon an expedient for restoring the lost prestige of the French Army. Soult was to march from Andalusia on Lisbon, join hands with Massena by a bridge across the Tagus, weary the British Army by a succession of outpost engagements, and, by constantly diminishing its strength, indispose the British Ministry and British Parliament to continue the struggle. But the game was up before the new features of it were well known. Early in March Massena was in full retreat. Before the first week of April was closed, the last regiment of his force had retraced its steps across the Portuguese frontier.

Soult, in the meantime, was, in obedience to his directions, advancing on Portugal. On the 19th February he sat down before Badajoz; on the 10th March that place was disgracefully surrendered by its Spanish garrison. Wellington had to hurry from the north, where he was pursuing Massena, to repair

the ill effects of Spanish cowardice. He found that Soult, after his success, had, on learning Massena's retreat, retired on Seville. Reinforcing Beresford, and directing him to attempt to regain Badajoz, Wellington hurried back to his own command. The critical period of the campaign had arrived. Massena, in the north, had reorganised his disheartened force, and was again advancing against the British army. Soult, in the south, was moving northwards from Seville to raise the siege of Badajoz. Notwithstanding his inferior force, and the comparative weakness of his position, Wellington, at Fuentes d'Onor, stood his ground against the French; '1500 unwounded men, the remnant of 6000 unconquerable British soldiers, stood triumphant on the fatal hill' at Albuera.[1]

The thanks of Parliament were necessarily voted to the distinguished officers and brave men who had accomplished so much for England. On the 26th April, ten days before the battle of Fuentes d'Onor was fought, the thanks of the Houses were, on Perceval's motion, unanimously voted to Lord Wellington for his defence of Portugal.[2] On the 7th June, a similar compliment was paid to Beresford and the brave men who served under him at Albuera. But the Ministry were not contented with voting thanks to their successful generals and soldiers. Perceval, in the previous year, had ob-

[1] Napier. [2] Hansard, xix. 768; xx. 521.

tained a grant of 1,000,000*l.* to enable the King to maintain a body of Portuguese troops in his pay. On the 18th March, 1811, he proposed that the sum should be doubled, and that 2,000,000*l.*, in lieu of 1,000,000*l.*, should be voted for the succeeding twelve months. The vote was granted:[1] but the discussion afforded the Opposition an opportunity for inveighing against the policy of the struggle in the Peninsula. 'The system of assisting the Peninsula by arms opposed and blamed with all their force by Opposition,' wrote Ward. 'Fremantle made an able speech . . . . in which his whole argument went to prove that, because Buonaparte had conquered all the rest of the Continent, he therefore must conquer the Peninsula, because he had greater numbers to bring up after every defeat, and therefore defeat was vain.'[2] Ponsonby, the leader of the Opposition, was quite as despondent. 'Do you think,' he asked, 'that you can prevent France from overrunning Spain by continuing the war in Portugal? . . . I say that neither in Spain nor in Portugal has anything happened that can give us reason to believe that the war there will terminate to our advantage.'[3] But Ponsonby and Fremantle

[1] The Duke of Buckingham, in his 'Memoirs of the Regency' (i. 53), inserts a rumour that the additional 1,000,000*l.* was wrung out of Perceval by Lord Wellesley 'as if it was so much of his blood.' It is sufficient to reply that this rumour, which is only given as mere gossip, is not, so far as I know, supported either by direct or indirect evidence.

[2] Plumer Ward, i. 406. [3] Hansard, xix. 397.

were not singular in their views. In both Houses the Opposition were continually insisting on the hopelessness of the war. It is Perceval's chief merit that, against such an Opposition, he should have continued to persevere.

But the maintenance of a Portuguese force was not the only object for which the Ministry demanded the assistance of Parliament. During the retreat to Torres Vedras, as well as during the operations of the subsequent spring, the Portuguese had been exposed to the severest suffering, and Perceval proposed that 100,000*l.* should be granted towards the relief of their necessities. The motion was unanimously agreed to: Perceval, in fact, being seconded by Ponsonby, the leader of the Opposition; and the mover and seconder, so far from deeming it necessary to defend the grant, regretting that the necessities of the country should have made it imperative to limit the amount of it.

Nor were the efforts of the Ministry confined to subsidising Portugal. Lord Palmerston introduced the Army estimates on the 4th March; Yorke, the Navy estimates on the 15th of the same month; Ashley Cooper, the Ordnance estimates on the 1st April.[1] The supplies, which were thus demanded, far exceeded any that had hitherto been voted. Including the 2,100,000*l.*, which had been voted for Portugal, upwards of 56,000,000*l.* were granted; or

[1] Hansard, xix. 188, 371, 670.

nearly 4,000,000*l.* more than had been voted in the preceding year.

Such were the prodigious efforts which the Ministry were making to continue the war. Their efforts were the more commendable because England at the time was suffering from a great commercial depression. It is hardly possible, in this work, to examine the causes of the great paralysis of trade which afflicted England at the close of 1810 and the commencement of 1811. The lean kine were following the fat kine. An inflated currency had led to speculation; over-speculation had involved unsound trade; unsound trade, on the first crisis, had led to disaster. The writers, who have criticised the paralysis of 1811, have usually ascribed it to the cessation of our American trade in consequence of the Non-Intercourse Act. It would probably be as just to say that the prosperity of 1809–10 was due to the Orders in Council, as it is to imply that the depression of 1810–11 was due to the American Non-Intercourse Act. It is a sufficient reply to such a contention that our imports continued to increase after our exports had commenced to decline. Our imports rose from 30,400,000*l.* in 1809, to 36,420,000*l.* in 1810; while our Foreign and British exports decreased from 50,280,000*l.* to 45,880,000*l.* If the Non-Intercourse Act had been the cause of the decline, our import trade should have been the first to suffer. The mere fact that our imports continued to increase proves that some other reason

must be found for the crisis. Nor can the reason be difficult to find. An inconvertible paper currency had involved the depreciation of coin; and the Government were compelled to intensify the depreciation by themselves becoming the largest purchasers of gold for the war in Spain. But, at the very moment that every broker on the Stock Exchange must consequently have been a 'Bull,' Horner's report, threatening a resumption of cash payments within two years, appeared. The 'Bulls' became 'Bears.' The men who were speculating on the certainty of a rise, saw themselves face to face with the strong probability of a fall. A crisis necessarily ensued. The excitement on the money-market made it a severe one. The exports immediately suffered, because they were instantly affected by the crisis on the Exchange. Our imports suffered less quickly, because the news of the crash only travelled slowly to the distant countries from which they were being consigned.

The severity of the crisis seems only to have been partially realised at the commencement of the Session. Yielding to the extraneous pressure of the mercantile classes, Perceval on the 1st March moved and obtained, after a brief debate, the appointment of 'a Select Committee to inquire into the state of commercial credit.'[1] The Committee lost no time over their work, and in the course of a week presented their report.

[1] Hansard, xix. 124.

They clearly traced the causes of the crisis to over-speculation; and they recommended, in accordance with the precedent of 1793, that 6,000,000*l.* Exchequer bills should be issued, and the amount of them advanced to the suffering manufacturers.[1] Perceval, four days later, proposed to give effect to the report of the Committee. No one can doubt now that his decision, as well as the recommendation of the Committee, was unsound. The manufacturers had over-speculated; they were suffering from the consequences of their own acts; and they might have been—nay, ought to have been—left to reap the fruit they had themselves sown. But it would be as unreasonable to pass judgment on the financiers of 1811, by the light of the knowledge which we possess in 1873, as it would be to condemn the horses of the eighteenth century because they were unable to draw loads on unmacadamised roads at the pace their descendants have acquired from M'Adam's assistance. Pitt was, with one exception, incomparably the greatest financier England ever produced: and Pitt in 1793 followed the course which Perceval pursued in 1811. Perceval's proposal in 1811 was so generally approved that his resolution was agreed to without a division. The subject, in short, affords a proof of the utter absence of all financial knowledge during the opening years of the nineteenth century.[2] It neither directly nor indirectly proves that Perceval

[1] Hansard, xix. 249. [2] Ibid. 327.

was a retrograde finance minister. It is true that, in its subsequent stages, the Commercial Credit Bill met with slight opposition. Lord Folkestone divided the House against it on the second, Whitbread on the third, reading. But what was the support these economists obtained? Lord Folkestone mustered 16, Whitbread only 4 votes! The Minister on the first occasion had 113, on the second occasion 41 supporters.[1]

Later in the Session Horner drew attention to his Bullion report. He moved, on the 6th May, a series of resolutions affirming the necessity of reverting to cash payments within 'two years from the present time.' The debate, which is voluminously reported in Hansard, was a very long one. Rose, Horner, and Thornton occupied between them the whole of the first evening; Vansittart, Huskisson, and Castlereagh, the next. Perceval spoke late on the third night of the debate; insisted that 'the resumption of cash payments would be tantamount to a declaration that they would no longer continue those foreign exertions which they had hitherto considered as indispensable to the security of the country;' and strongly resisted Horner's resolutions.

The House on the following day rejected Horner's resolutions in two successive divisions by large majorities.[2] Their rejection paved the way for Vansittart; who, on the 13th May, or four days after

[1] Hansard, xix. 418, 496.

[2] Ibid. 1063, 1169.

the previous divisions, proposed to substitute, for the resolutions which had been rejected, seventeen of his own. Vansittart's resolutions affirmed the inexpediency and danger of fixing 'a definite period for the removal of the restriction of cash payments at the Bank of England, prior to the term already fixed . . . of six months after the conclusion of a definitive treaty of peace.' Vansittart, like Perceval, acknowledged that 'the difficulty which really presses upon it is that of providing for the foreign expenditure of the Government,' and avowed that it did 'credit to the manly character of the Chancellor of the Exchequer that he has not attempted to disguise this difficulty, or to keep out of sight the degree in which the evils we suffer are to be traced to the necessity of carrying on a vigorous and expensive war on the Continent.' Vansittart's resolutions were opposed by Canning. Perceval resisted the latter, and supported Vansittart. Canning, on a division, was defeated by 82 votes to 42: and Vansittart's resolutions were agreed to *pro formâ*.[1] The long discussions on the currency seemed to be concluded, when they were compelled to be resumed in consequence of the action of an individual. Towards the middle of June, Lord King, a nobleman of high character, great political distinction, and large landed property, issued a notice to his tenants that his rents were in future to be paid either in gold, or in paper estimated

[1] Hansard, xx. 65, 128.

by the price of gold. The Government, at first, were disposed to conclude that the notice had only been issued as an eccentric criticism on the Bullion debates, and that Lord King would hesitate to enforce so hard a law against his own tenantry. The currency of the country had, it was true, suffered a depreciation of about 20 per cent. But the good sense of Englishmen had hitherto induced them to submit to an inevitable state of things. No one had declined to take bank paper at its nominal value. It seemed incredible that a great nobleman and a great landlord would be the first to set the example.

In a very short time, however, it not only became evident that Lord King was in earnest; but that his example was likely to be followed by other landlords. It became obviously necessary to take steps to remedy the evil; and Lord Stanhope introduced a Bill into the House of Lords to make bank-notes a legal tender. The Bill was clearly inevitable; though, much to their discredit, it was opposed by Lord Holland and Lord Grenville. Notwithstanding this opposition it passed rapidly through all its stages in the Upper House; and was in the Commons on the 9th of July; Perceval himself having taken charge of it. The Bill was hotly opposed by Whitbread and Tierney, the latter declaring that 'its advocates were two of the most suspicious characters in the world—a Chancellor of the Exchequer and a Bank Director' (Baring); but the first reading was,

nevertheless, carried by 64 votes to 19 ;[1] the second reading was carried on the 15th by 133 votes to 35 ; and the Bill was finally passed on the 19th July.[2]

During the interval between the second and third readings a rather curious discussion was raised. Creevey insisted that the Bank Directors were interested in the Bill, and ought therefore to be precluded from voting upon it. The objection was clearly groundless; the Speaker gave an opinion dead against it; and it was disallowed. So far it would have been hardly worth noticing, but Creevey took occasion to enforce the objection by illustrating it with the name, which in alphabetical order stood first on the list of Directors, Lord Arden. Perceval in introducing the Bill had contended that he did not believe that when Lord King reflected that the conduct which he was pursuing had been hitherto only adopted by pedlars and Jews, he would persevere in it. Creevey inquired, in a pointed way, whether Lord Arden, whose fees as Registrar of the Court of Admiralty amounted to 12,000*l.* a-year, and who had never less than 200,000*l.* of public money in his hands, might not be given the same appellation? The indignation which the expression excited, strongly marked the sense of Perceval's popularity. Dent 'thought my Lord Arden had been dragged in head and heels for the purpose of being abused. . . . The noble Lord had been introduced because his hon. friend was

[1] Hansard, xx. 906. [2] Ibid. xx. 980, 1106.

aware that the Right Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer had too much of dignity, too much of feeling, to answer the observation, and therefore he thought himself secure, and that he should go scot free.'[1] But this little interlude was not the most striking feature of these debates. Far more important was the evidence they displayed of the rupture between the Prince's friends and the rest of the Opposition. 'Debate on second reading of Gold Coin Bill,' wrote the Speaker on the 15th July, '*all the Prince's friends voted for the Bill.*' 'Third reading of Gold Coin Bill,' he writes on the 19th, '*Sheridan speaking against Tierney and e converso.*'[2] Brougham, writing to Lord Grey on the 23rd, notices the fact more fully. 'What I. wish to apprise you of is (*sic*) a few particulars touching the late debates in the House of Commons, which the newspapers could not tell. All the Prince's friends voted against us regularly on every question. Except on the Regency, they have never attended so zealously.

'Sheridan both voted and spoke, after saying he should only vote for sending it to a Committee; Tierney gave him a severe licking, which Sheridan did not like, and complains bitterly of. Jekyll voted with us once, which was very handsome. Adam never appeared the whole week, but has, I understand, a very strong opinion with us. William Lamb was always there at some part of the debate, but never

[1] Hansard, xx 1007. [2] Colchester, ii. 342.

at the division. He does not vote either one way or another. Pierce, governor of the Bank, was under the gallery; and the Duke of Cumberland sat by him flirting for two hours one night. In short, the whole Carlton House interest has been most actively exerted—with what views I think it not very difficult to guess.'[1]

The effects of the commercial crisis on the revenue of the country were, in the first instance, hardly as perceptible as might have been anticipated. Perceval brought forward the Budget on the 20th May. The supplies slightly exceeded 56,020,000*l.* and a little more than 49,450,000*l.* of this sum was a charge on Great Britain. Perceval placed the ways and means at 49,555,000*l.*; but 24,000,000*l.* of the sum was to be raised by a loan: 12,000,000*l.* to replace Exchequer Bills funded during the year, and 12,000,000*l.* by the issue of fresh stock. These loans involved an additional charge of about 1,200,000*l.* a-year; and the Minister proposed to raise this sum by taxes on spirits, American cotton, Baltic timber, and pearl and potash.[2] The scheme met with little criticism and no opposition. Its salient features were indeed already known, as Bills for the imposition of the new duties had previously been passed.

But, though the Minister had no difficulty in carrying his Budget, he was subjected to defeat on another financial question. A Mr. Palmer had in

[1] Autobiography, i. 524.

[2] Hansard, xx. 210; Colchester, ii. 333.

1793 introduced various improvements in the working of the Post, in consideration of which he had been promised 2½ per cent on any net profits the department might earn in excess of 240,000*l.* a-year. Pitt had, however, given him in exchange for this per-centage the comptrollership of the office; and, if Mr. Palmer had only done his duty, nothing more would have been heard of the matter. Palmer, however, did not do his duty; he neglected his business so greatly that it became necessary to remove him from his place; but, in consideration of what he had done, he was given, on his removal, a pension of 3000*l.* a-year. This, however, he considered a very inadequate return for his previous services; and he succeeded in prevailing on some member to make a motion in the House of Commons which would have had the effect of more than quadrupling his pension. Nothing more seems to have been heard of the business till after Pitt's death. In 1807, however, Palmer succeeded in obtaining a Select Committee to investigate his claims. In 1808 the House of Commons, in opposition to the Minister, carried two motions in his favour by large majorities; and Perceval was reluctantly compelled to bring in a Bill to grant him a sum of 50,000*l.* Perceval had taken this course to enable the Lords to exercise their discretion in the matter. The Appropriation Act they would have been constitutionally incompetent to amend; a separate Act of Parliament they were of course able to reject: and, with the express object of insuring its rejection,

Perceval, against the Speaker's opinion, proceeded by separate Bill.[1] The result was as Perceval had foreseen; the Lords threw out the Bill; and Palmer never got his money. In 1811, when Mr. Palmer was himself dead, the motion was renewed in favour of his son. Perceval again resisted it; but an address to the Regent, praying him to advance to Mr. Palmer the sum of 54,000*l.* and assuring His Royal Highness that the House would 'make good the same,' was nevertheless carried by 107 votes to 42.[2] The Lords debated the next day the conduct of the Commons in agreeing to a grant which they themselves had refused, but wisely abstained from any further proceeding; and, on the 24th of May, Lord John Thynne brought up the Regent's answer to the address. 'It must at all times be my most earnest desire to attend to the wishes of the House of Commons, and I shall be ready to give effect to them in this instance whenever the means shall have been provided by Parliament.' The Speaker, a great stickler for the rights of the House, was extremely annoyed with this answer. 'Rode with Lord Liverpool,' he wrote on the 25th, 'talked over the Regent's answer with him, and afterwards with Perceval and Ryder; told them all that, however the answer, if construed as applying only to Palmer's case, under the circumstances of the declared opinion of the Lords, might be justifiable; yet that this was

[1] Colchester, ii. 149, 156. [2] Hansard, xx. 268.

the first instance of any answer from the Sovereign declining to issue money for which the Commons had addressed; and that, being coupled with the intimation that it was not issued, because not yet provided for, the inference went to the destruction of the whole privilege of addressing for issues of money, which always assumed that the money was not yet provided, but pledged the Commons to grant it afterwards. This intention Perceval expressly disclaimed: the practice, whether desirable or undesirable, being now too long established to allow of its being overturned.

'In the House of Commons Whitbread gave notice of a motion upon the subject of this answer; and Williams Wynn complained of it as affronting and insulting to the House of Commons.'

The strong impression which the Regent's answer made on the Speaker is still more strikingly illustrated by an entry in his diary a year afterwards. After paying a high compliment to Perceval's debating powers, he went on to complain of his treatment of the House of Commons, and specified this very answer to illustrate his meaning.[1]

Whitbread's motion, to which the Speaker alluded in the preceding extract, was discussed on the 30th May. 'That whoever advised,' it ran, 'the Prince Regent to doubt the readiness and sufficiency of this House to make good any sum which, in compliance

[1] Colchester, ii. 333, 381.

with its address to the effect, His Royal Highness shall direct to be advanced, gave advice calculated to disturb that good understanding between the Crown and the Commons which it is of the highest importance to support and maintain."[1] But the House, though they were fully prepared to grant Palmer's claim, were not prepared to censure the Minister. Whitbread's motion was rejected by a very large majority, 161 votes to 68.[2]

On an impartial consideration of the merits of this case, it seems impossible to doubt that the Speaker was in the right and Perceval in the wrong. The propriety of the claim itself was, indeed, open to question; but the propriety of the claim was no longer the point at issue. The House had decided by a large majority to pay the money; and it was the duty of the leader of the House to give effect to their decision. It is true that a compliance with the views of the Commons might have led to an embarrassing conflict with the Lords. But, in the first place, Perceval's first duty was to his own House; and, in the next place, the point was a money question, on which the Commons had a right to insist that the Lords should give way. Perceval felt himself strong enough to resist the Commons; it is none the less the duty of the historian to censure him for doing so.

[1] Hansard, xx. 349. [2] Ibid. 365.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SESSION OF 1812.

1811–1812.

How Perceval achieved Success — Seeds of Schism in the Administration—Lord Wellesley—Expiration of the Regency Restrictions — Debts of the Prince Regent — The Regent's Establishment—Correspondence of Lord Wellesley and Perceval — Meeting of Parliament — The Regent's Speech — Wellesley Pole's Change of Opinions — State of Ireland — Lord Wellesley's Resignation — Perceval's Conduct of the War in the Peninsula — Letter from Lord Wellington — The Catholic Question — Wellesley Pole's Memorandum — Resignation of Charles Yorke — Overture to Lords Grey and Grenville — Official Rearrangements — Defence of Sinecures.

THE Session of 1811 was, beyond question, the most eventful period of Perceval's career. When it had opened he was generally regarded as a falling Minister, with a formidable majority to contend with in the House, and a Regent to whom he was personally and politically offensive. Before the Session was six weeks old he was more powerful in the House of Commons than any Minister since the days of Pitt; he had made himself a necessity to the Prince, who had hitherto regarded him as his bitterest enemy. The crisis had brought out powers of

which only his most intimate associates had previously been aware. It had made him a party leader of the very first rank; it had gained him a reputation as the foremost Parliamentary Debater of the age.

Only a few months before Perceval had been regarded as a weak Minister. He was supposed to owe his place to the favour of his King; he was supposed to retain it by compromise and concession. No one imagined that, when the prop on which he had leaned was withdrawn, it would be possible for him to maintain his position. His rule was identified with the reign of George the Third. When the latter was either literally or practically determined, the Minister of his choice, it was surmised, would necessarily fall too. Perceval's best friends as well as his bitterest opponents agreed in this conclusion. The Regent would be sure, they thought, to dismiss Perceval, just as George the Third had dismissed all the Talents.

That the result should have falsified the speculations of politicians of every phase of opinion is one of the most singular circumstances of modern history. The autumn of 1810 proved that the very cause which had been thought to keep Perceval in office, was really responsible for the weakness of his administration. The moment the prop on which he leaned was withdrawn, the moment he was left to his own resources, the occasion brought out the

great qualities of the man; and these qualities enabled him to triumph over every difficulty.

It is worth while to consider for a moment the manner in which Perceval achieved his surprising success. Nine men out of every ten would, in such a situation, have proposed a compromise. Nine men out of every ten would, under such circumstances, have made slight concessions. Perceval never conceded. Even after defeat he reverted to his original programme, and persevered till success rewarded his perseverance. Nine men out of every ten would have imagined that trivial concessions would have kept his own party in good-humour. Perceval consolidated his following by never receding from one of his earlier intentions. The result is worth noting. The men who dissented from his policy were induced, by sheer respect, to follow the man. The men who agreed with him were inspired with an enthusiasm for their leader which probably is unparalleled in the whole course of Parliamentary history.

It may, indeed, be thought that Perceval refused to give way because concessions would have enhanced the power of the Prince, and have consequently enabled him to strengthen the Whig Government, which was apparently on the point of succeeding to power. But it is worth observing that the point on which Perceval fought the hardest battles; on which he was twice defeated—the Queen's Household—had nothing whatever to do with the power of

the Prince. It simply affected the comfort of the Queen; it was supposed that the manner in which it was decided might retard or promote the King's recovery. Perceval then fought his greatest battles for the sake of a king who was no longer able to befriend him; and the battle was fought and won in opposition to the views of a section of the Tory party, and at a direct sacrifice of the apparent interest of the Minister.

Ability and pluck achieved their reward. Never was Minister stronger than Perceval in 1811. He used his strength to double our efforts in the Peninsula; and to promote the objects of the great general who was so ably conducting the campaign. One month before the close of the Session Perceval felt so firm in his saddle that he told the Speaker that he had not 'any expectation of a change of administration;' yet, even at that time, the seeds of the schism had already been sown, which six months later were on the point of breaking up the Perceval administration.

Lord Wellesley occupied, from the first, a peculiar position in the Cabinet. His original support had been properly regarded as the fairest promise which had then been given of the future stability of the Ministry. Though he had little or no Parliamentary influence, his great career and his great administrative abilities were felt to materially increase the weight of a Ministry which was otherwise deficient in first-rate administrators. Lord Wellesley's repu-

tation as an administrator deserved to be high; it was as high as it deserved to be. It was said that, on his return from India in 1806, no man except Pitt bore so great a name. His mission to Spain was one of Canning's chief achievements at the Foreign Office. His junction with Perceval first taught men to hope that the new Ministry might possibly stand after all.

Yet Lord Wellesley, from the very first, had never worked quite comfortably with his new colleagues. In the very spring after the Ministry was formed, the political gossips insinuated that Lord Wellesley had hoped that an adverse vote on the Walcheren Expedition would compel Perceval to resign. During the succeeding months he was constantly endeavouring to procure Canning's accession to the Cabinet. The continued illness of the King was modifying the position of the Catholic question; and Lord Wellesley held different views on this subject from those of his colleagues.

The breach, which was gradually forming between the two statesmen, might possibly have been anticipated. Perceval and Wellesley were cast in different moulds, and had been trained in different schools. Perceval had spent the best years of his life in studying the ways and manners of the House of Commons. In consequence he had become the greatest Parliamentary leader of the day. Wellesley, on the contrary, had devoted the best portion of his career to the autocratic management of the Indian

Empire: and he had become the first administrator of the age. Macaulay has remarked, in one of his admirable essays, that a man who has passed the best years of his life in India has much to learn and unlearn before he can take rank among Parliamentary statesmen. The Governor-General, a practically absolute ruler, has only to consider the best course to be pursued. The Parliamentary statesman has to devise the best course for which it is possible for him to obtain the sanction of the Legislature.

When Lord Wellesley had once convinced himself that a policy was desirable, he never paused to consider whether it was possible. Perceval knew that one half of the House of Commons were satisfied that expenditure on the Peninsula was money thrown away, and therefore, though he increased it to the utmost possible point, he felt it hopeless to propose the extraordinary efforts which had found favour with Lord Wellesley. Lord Wellesley, on the contrary, had brought himself to believe that any lesser efforts were imperfect, and declined to 'continue any longer the imperfect instrument of an imperfect system.' If credit may be given to an unsigned but most important letter which the Duke of Buckingham published in his memoirs of the Regency, Lord Wellesley, in September, was intriguing against Perceval. He had gained even then the ear of the Regent; had converted the latter to the opinion that the war must be conducted on principles which Lord Grey and Lord Grenville disapproved, and to

lengths to which Perceval would not go; and had therefore led up to the inevitable conclusion that the only possible Minister was Lord Wellesley himself. Three Dukes, Northumberland, Norfolk, and Devonshire, were ready to co-operate with him. Lord Lansdowne and Lord Holland were said to be in his favour. Canning, of course, was available in the House of Commons; and Castlereagh, it was thought, might be gained upon very easy terms.[1]

'The great political movement just described,' the Duke of Buckingham well observes on the passage, 'must be regarded as a repetition of that which led to the quarrel of Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Canning; with this difference, that now the Marquis Wellesley was straining every nerve to oust a colleague to introduce his friend, Mr. Canning; just as the latter had exerted all his influence to introduce his friend, the Marquis Wellesley.'[2]

The communications between Lord Wellesley and the Prince seem to have continued all the autumn with varying success. The Prince's brothers took different sides. The Duke of York espoused the cause of Lord Wellesley, the Duke of Cumberland that of Perceval. The same writer, who has already been quoted, tells us that during the earlier period of the autumn 'the personal intercourse between the Prince Regent and Lord Wellesley continued with unabated frequency and apparent

[1] Regency, i. 127.

[2] Ibid. i. 126.

warmth of attachment on the part of the former. The Continent was conquered over and over again in these interviews, and Europe divided anew between the various legitimate ex-kings and princes now disengaged from the toils of government.' But, in the latter part of the autumn 'a visible change took place; the visits of the Duke of York at Carlton House became much more rare . . . . . those of the Duke of Cumberland increased in an inverse proportion . . . . the Prince's language with respect to Perceval and his Irish politics underwent a very considerable change. The Wellesley star seemed to be no longer the lord of the ascendant.'

Towards the close of the year, however, the situation again changed. The Prince was detained by illness at Oatlands, and the Duke of York and Lord Wellesley were his constant visitors; the Duke of Cumberland was rarely admitted.[1] 'There is no guessing what the Prince means to do,' wrote Moore the poet. 'One can as little anticipate his measures as those of Bonaparte, but for a *very different reason.* I am sure the powder in His Royal Highness's hair is much more settled than anything in his head.' Lord Buckingham's anonymous correspondent, however, did something more than guess. 'There does not at this moment exist a doubt in the minds of Lord Wellesley, or of those more immediately attached to him, of the Prince's putting the former

[1] Regency, i. 156, 157.

at the head of his Government, the moment he becomes unrestricted.' 'You may be as sure of it as of your existence,' he adds, on M'Mahon's authority, the next day, 'that Lord Wellesley will be at the head of the Government as soon as the Prince is his own master.'

The Prince would be his own master six weeks after the meeting of Parliament, when the Regency restrictions were to expire; and Parliament met on the 7th January. The Cabinet had been actively engaged in considering the proposals which it was necessary under the circumstances to make. There were at least three or four matters to settle. In the first place, an establishment had to be provided for the King; in the next place, the Queen's income had to be fixed; in the third place, it was evidently a topic for consideration whether the Prince should receive as Regent the same civil list as his father had enjoyed as King; and, in the fourth place, the Prince was heavily in debt, and the Cabinet had to decide whether it was or was not desirable to propose any grant to Parliament for the express purpose of relieving him from his embarrassments. The Prince's own views on the matter were expressed by Lord Wellesley, in a letter to Perceval, on the 27th November. 'He' (the Regent), wrote Lord Wellesley to him, 'continues to think that the dignity of the King and the comfort of his situation will be best provided for by a separate establishment under

a new officer of the highest rank. That the Regent should have the full civil list and the full state as well as power of the crown, and should resign his allowance as Prince of Wales. That the Queen should have an independent allowance, and the Princesses the same. He considers this part of the arrangement to be inseparable from the establishment of the Regency on a permanent basis. He will state many strong considerations in favour of his plan, and appears intent on carrying it into execution."[1] The whole of this plan the Cabinet was not prepared to concede. They were prepared indeed to grant a separate allowance, 70,000*l.* a-year, to the Queen; and they were ready to allow 100,000*l.* to discharge with becoming dignity the expenses of the King's establishment; but they did not think it necessary to place a new officer of high rank at the head of it; and they decided on obtaining the money required for the maintenance of the King by deducting it from the Regent's civil list. It was obvious that a deduction of 100,000*l.* a-year would not be very palatable to a prince in the Regent's position. But one moiety of it, or 50,000*l.*, the Cabinet proposed should be replaced by paying a portion of the Prince's Exchequer revenue into the Civil List. With the other moiety it was thought that the Prince might dispense, as his family was so much smaller than the King's.

[1] Lord Wellesley to Perceval, 27 Nov. 1811, Perceval Papers.

There was still one other matter for consideration. The Prince was heavily in debt, and the expense of assuming the Regency had been considerable. If we may believe the best informed of the gossips of the time, the Prince wanted the whole of the Cornish arrears, or 700,000*l.*, to be conceded to him as a right; and Lord Wellesley desired to compromise the matter by paying His Royal Highness's debts, which, it was understood, amounted to 525,000*l.* It was not very likely that Perceval would assent to the first of these suggestions. It has already been shown in this memoir that he had actively resisted the Prince's claim to these arrears on a former occasion, and it could hardly have been expected that he would have conceded as a Minister a demand which he had strenuously opposed as a law-officer. If Lord Buckingham's anonymous correspondent is right in thinking that Lord Wellesley did wish to pay the Prince's debts, no trace of his wish exists in the correspondence between Perceval and himself. The cordial manner in which he supported the Prince generally, and the dissatisfaction which he felt at the ultimate arrangement, are, however, clearly visible.

'Many of the objections,' he wrote to Perceval, for instance, on the 18th December, 'are now removed, and it is not my wish to record any formal dissent against such parts of the arrangement as shall appear to me to be imperfect; nor shall I at any time hereafter express my disapprobation of a plan which has been approved of by so many persons

whom I respect and esteem. It would, however, be uncandid to suppress from you the knowledge of my sentiments, even in this stage of the transaction; and I wish this note to be privately communicated by you to the Prince Regent.

'I am of opinion that the Groom of the Stole, who is to preside over the King's establishment, must be invested with some new title designating his new powers, and that the precedence which it is essential to give him must be annexed to that new title. It will not be proper to give the Groom of the Stole, *eo nomine*, precedence over the great officers of the Household. This point, I should imagine, might easily be arranged. I entertain great apprehension that a sum of less than 150,000*l.* will not be adequate to the relief of the Prince's incumbrances, and I should certainly have wished that a sum to that amount should have been proposed to Parliament. But I will not dispute against your knowledge of the temper of the House of Commons; nor will I ever censure the grant as inadequate hereafter. I confess, however, that I think a considerable effort should be made on this point, and even some risk incurred, rather than expose the Prince Regent to the difficulties which I apprehend. Upon inferior matters of detail, and some parts of the principles of the general plan, I will not repeat the observations which I have already made, and of which the foundation still remains unaltered, because I am anxious to acquiesce in the sentiments of others to the utmost possible extent; and I shall not hereafter disturb the unanimity which seems to prevail on these arrangements. But it would be neither just to you, nor to the Prince Regent, that the actual state of my opinion, as expressed in this form, should be suppressed.'

During the following week the Prince made one more effort to obtain a larger sum for his preliminary expenses, and the Cabinet once more declined to give way. Lord Wellesley again differed from the

judgment of his colleagues; and that he felt strongly may be inferred from the manner in which he expressed his difference:—

'I did not understand clearly from you,' he wrote to Perceval on the 24th of December, 'in what manner you intended to signify the decision of the Cabinet to the Prince Regent respecting the amount of the sum to be proposed to Parliament for His Royal Highness's service; but I request that, in signifying it, you will communicate my opinion that the sum of 150,000*l.* would have been preferable to that which is now fixed.

'The reference seemed to be of a more formal nature than any document yet received from the Prince Regent during this discussion. You will use your discretion as to the mode of stating my sentiments; but I conceive, after such a reference, it would not be candid on my part to allow my opinion to be suppressed. It is indifferent to me whether a regular minute of Cabinet be drawn or not, but I wish substantially that my sentiments should be distinctly stated.'

So for the moment, at any rate, ended the matter. Lord Wellesley had given way; but he had thought it necessary in doing so to take the unusual course of insisting that his own opinion should be communicated to the Regent. Fourteen days after his letter, or on the 7th January, Parliament met.

The Regent's speech was read by Commissioners. 'It spoke of the King's continued inability to resume the powers of government, and the necessary provision to be made for his household; the war in the Peninsula; the pending negotiations with America; the East India Company's charter; Irish

revenue, &c.' There was a general disposition, at the opening, to postpone any active opposition till the restrictions had expired. But Burdett jumped up before Lord Jocelyn, who was to have moved the Address, could catch the Speaker's eye, made 'a long, desultory, violent, and miscellaneous speech, defamatory of the policy of this country at home and abroad for the last eighteen years, with a very long address to the same effect, very wicked and foolish. . . . . Lord Jocelyn's intended address was turned into an amendment.' Burdett was beaten by 243 votes to 1! and, 'after a few words from Whitbread, Ponsonby, and Perceval,' the amendment passed without a division.[1] The debate was renewed on the following day on the Report. Whitbread attacked the Ministry, and declared that 'the more he allowed the abilities of Lord Wellington, the more was he inclined to . . . despair of success.' Perceval, in reply, reminded the House of the gloomy predictions that Whitbread had erroneously hazarded in previous sessions, and applied to him the lines of Pope:—

> 'Destroy the web of prophecy; in vain!
> The creature's at his dirty work again.'

The House laughed; but Whitbread rose 'to demand of the right honourable gentleman to explain whether he meant any personal allusion in some words that fell from him of no very delicate descrip-

[1] Colchester, ii. 351; [2] Hansard, xxi. 49.

tion.' 'I could have meant none,' replied Perceval. 'The lines are Pope's—the metaphor is that of a spider spinning a new web after one has been destroyed. I thought it applicable to the pertinacious manner in which the honourable gentleman appeared to me to have been reviving his old prophecies over again; but I do assure him that I would not have so applied it, could I have imagined that he would have so construed it; and that, were I even indifferent to his disapprobation—which I am not—I could not be so indifferent to my own as to descend to the grossness of any such personal allusion.' Whitbread expressed himself perfectly satisfied.[1] The debate went on, and the Report was agreed to without a division.

On the following day the House appointed a Committee to examine the King's physicians. The report was made on the 13th, but its contents must have been anticipated. The King had been much worse since the prorogation; and, ill as he had been in the recess, he had been still more so during the previous days. 'It appears,' wrote the Speaker, 'that the King has had a violent return of paroxysms since Friday, such as to any person of less constitutional strength would be considered as dangerous to life.'[2] The resumption, then, of his personal authority was out of the question. The restrictions, it was certain, must be permitted in due course to

[1] Hansard, xxi. 63. [2] Colchester, ii. 353.

expire, and the necessary household arrangements must be made in the interval. Perceval rose to propose two resolutions on the subject on the 16th January. The first of them contemplated the addition to the Queen's income of 70,000*l.* a-year out of the Consolidated Fund. The second declared the expediency 'of providing for the expenses incident to the assumption of the personal exercise of the royal authority by His Royal Highness the Prince Regent.'

The unknown correspondent, from whom the Duke of Buckingham has borrowed so largely, tells us that 'a worse speech was never delivered in Parliament than that of Mr. Perceval on bringing in the Household Bill.' If his speech was bad, he had some excuse for it. There had been rumours for some days previous of a split in the Cabinet, and, as a matter of fact, Lord Wellesley had resigned the very day on which Perceval rose to move the Household Regulations. The manner in which he resigned was, to say the least, singular, and Lord Wellesley himself probably regretted it afterwards. In lieu of approaching the Regent through the Prime Minister, he took the unusual course of addressing himself directly to His Royal Highness; and the first intimation which Perceval received of the resignation of his principal colleague was during an interview the next morning with the Regent. Some hours afterwards, Lord Bathurst called on him with a message from Lord Wellesley:—

'It is with great regret,' wrote Perceval to Lord Wellesley on the 17th, 'that I have just received from Lord Bathurst the communication which you desired him to make to me. It would have taken me completely by surprise, had it not been for what His Royal Highness the Prince Regent told me this morning, which had prepared me to expect such a communication. I understand that your determination is too completely fixed to give me any hopes of a change, and consequently I have nothing to do except, in expressing my thanks for your desire to arrange the time both for acting upon this determination and for making it known in the way least likely to embarrass His Royal Highness's Government, to express my deep regret that you should have found it necessary to adopt such a determination at all.'

The gossips of the time concluded that Lord Wellesley's resignation was due to his opinion in respect to the Catholic claims. 'The present Ministry,' wrote the Speaker on the 16th, 'would certainly split on the Catholic question.' 'I am morally certain,' wrote Lord Buckingham's anonymous correspondent, 'of a separation, and that upon the Catholic question.' But Lord Wellesley's liberal disposition towards the Catholics was not certainly the sole, nor perhaps the chief, reason which prompted his retirement. Many weeks afterwards a statement, of which the following are the most important passages, was published of the causes which had induced him to leave the Ministry:—

'Lord Wellesley expressed his intention to resign, because his general opinion, for a long time past, on various

important questions, had not sufficient weight to justify him towards the public, or towards his own character, in continuing in office; and because he had no hope of obtaining from the Cabinet (as then constituted) a greater portion of attention than he had already experienced.

'Lord Wellesley's objections to remaining in the Cabinet arose, in a great degree, from the narrow and imperfect scale on which the efforts in the Peninsula were conducted. It was always stated to him by Mr. Perceval that it was impracticable to enlarge that system. The Cabinet followed Mr. Perceval implicitly. Lord Wellesley thought that it was perfectly practicable to extend the plan in the Peninsula, and that it was neither safe towards this country or the Allies, to continue the present imperfect scheme. No hope existed of converting Mr. Perceval, or any of his colleagues: no alternative, therefore, remained for Lord Wellesley but to resign, or to submit to be the instrument of a system which he never advised, and which he could not approve.

'Lord Wellesley had repeatedly, with great reluctance, yielded his opinions to the Cabinet on many other important points. He was sincerely convinced by experience that, in every such instance, he had submitted to opinions more incorrect than his own, and had sacrificed to the object of accommodation and temporary harmony more than he could justify in point of strict public duty. In fact, he was convinced by experience that the Cabinet neither possessed ability nor knowledge to devise a good plan, nor temper and discernment to adopt what he thought necessary, unless Mr. Perceval should concur with Lord Wellesley. To Mr. Perceval's judgment or attainments, Lord Wellesley (under the same experience) could not pay any deference without injury to the public service.

. . . . . .

'When it appeared, at the expiration of the restrictions, that the Prince Regent intended to continue Mr. Perceval's Government, Lord Wellesley again tendered the seals to

His Royal Highness with increased earnestness. On that occasion, being informed that His Royal Highness was still at liberty, and was resolved to form his Cabinet according to His Royal Highness's own views, and being commanded to state his opinions on the subject, Lord Wellesley declared that in his judgment the Cabinet ought to be formed, first, on an intermediary principle of respecting the Roman Catholic claims, equally exempt from the extremes of instant unqualified concession, and of peremptory external exclusion; and, second, on an understanding that the war should be conducted with adequate vigour. Lord Wellesley said that he was personally ready to serve *with* Mr. Perceval on such a basis, that he never again would serve *under* Mr. Perceval in any circumstances.'[1]

It is true that Lord Wellesley publicly expressed his regret at the publication of a paper, reflecting on one whose 'blameless life,' whose 'purity of mind,' and whose cruel death had thrown a 'lustre of martyrdom around his memory.'[2] But, though he expressed regret at its publication, he never repudiated the substance of the sentiments conveyed in it. It must be supposed, therefore, that the document reflects with tolerable accuracy Lord Wellesley's opinions. It is consequently necessary to examine with some care the reason set forth in it for his Lordship's resignation.

The reason is plain and intelligible. Lord Wellesley did not think that he had the weight in the Cabinet to which his abilities and position entitled him. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary

[1] Hansard, xxii. 367. [2] Ibid. 371.

took different sides on various questions, and the Cabinet supported the Prime Minister. Such a state of things must no doubt have been very insupportable to a statesman of Lord Wellesley's character. Lord Wellesley was a master of English, and he could not bear to have his well-turned dispatches altered by inferior intellects and inferior writers. Lord Wellesley was accustomed to the deference paid to an Indian viceroy, and he did not tolerate the rustic manners of some of his colleagues. Lord Westmoreland, on one occasion at a council, had placed his feet on the table; 'I will go on with my remarks,' said Lord Wellesley, 'when the noble Lord resumes a more seemly attitude.'

When such were Lord Wellesley's feelings, there was not much reason for surprise that continual defeat in the council-chamber should have induced him to desire to resign. But this general reason, however much it may have influenced his Lordship, could hardly have accounted for his actual retirement. The differences between two nations may smoulder for years till some slight cause falls, like a spark on the embers, and kindles a conflagration. A Minister may be discontented for months, but he does not resign without some specific reason for leaving his colleagues.

What, then, was the actual cause of Lord Wellesley's retirement? There are only three subjects mentioned in the paper which could by any possibility have induced it. The first is the in-

sufficient support of the war in Spain; the second, the position of the Catholic question; the third, the impossibility of serving *under* Mr. Perceval any longer. That this impossibility was not due to any discourtesy on Perceval's part, the following letter from Lord Wellesley will prove :—

'My dear Sir,' he wrote on the 18th January, in reply to the letter accepting his resignation, 'I request you to accept my thanks for your letter, which has afforded me the satisfaction of knowing that you have received my communication through our common friend, Lord Bathurst, in the spirit in which it was intended; and I assure you that *my sentiments and my determination are entirely unconnected with any feelings of unkindness or disrespect.*'

The other charges are more serious. Lord Wellesley had referred his resignation to the niggard support of the war, and later writers have consequently assumed that the allegation was well founded. 'Perceval,' said Napier, 'had neither the wisdom to support nor the manliness to put an end to the war in the Peninsula; his crooked, contemptible policy was shown by withholding what was necessary to continue the contest, and throwing on the General the responsibility of failure.' The charge, it will be seen, raises two questions :—Is it, in the first place, true that Perceval's support of the war was insufficient? Is it, in the next place, true that Lord Wellesley's resignation was attributable to this cause? It may be convenient to dispose of

the second of these questions before referring to the first of them.

That Lord Wellesley's resignation was not in reality attributable to Perceval's niggard support of the war may be proved both by negative and positive evidence. In the first place, Lord Wellesley himself, in referring to the matter after Perceval's death, admitted that 'he was so hopelessly in a minority on the subject that he never pressed his own views on the Cabinet to a division.'[1] And, in the next place, Lord Wellesley's silence was not merely confined to the Cabinet, but was extended to his correspondence. The greater portion of the correspondence between Perceval and his colleagues has not been preserved; but it so happens that the letters which passed between Lord Wellesley and himself, during the autumn of 1811, are still in existence. By the courtesy of Mr. Alfred Montgomery, the correspondence which Lord Wellesley left behind him has also been placed at the disposal of the author of this memoir. But neither the Perceval papers nor the Wellesley papers contain any letters, written in 1811 or 1812, from Lord Wellesley to Perceval bearing in any way on the war in Spain. The papers relate to the Regent's speech in 1811; the treaty with Russia; the differences with the United States; the pensions of distinguished diplomates; the Household arrange-

[1] Hansard, xxiii. 371.

ments; and other matters. They frequently exhibit traces of differences of opinion between the writer and Perceval; but, from the beginning to the end of them, there is not a single word about the war in Spain. It is of course possible, though it is to say the least unlikely, that Perceval may have had other correspondence with the Foreign Minister on this particular subject. But it is improbable that letters on so very important a subject should be missing, while those on comparatively unimportant matters have been preserved. The Perceval and Wellesley papers then afford strong negative evidence that the war in Spain was not the real ground of Lord Wellesley's resignation.

There is then nothing, either in the correspondence or in Lord Wellesley's own statement, to show that he ever complained, either to the Cabinet or to Perceval, that the support of the war was inadequate. It would have been in fact impossible to have made such a complaint at the time. The charge which was then uniformly made was the folly of the lavish expenditure on the war. It will be found again and again in the columns of Hansard; Brougham used to reiterate it in the 'Edinburgh Review;' it was restated, after Perceval's death, in Williams' memoir of him.

But is Napier right in inferring from the ordinary account of Lord Wellesley's resignation that the support of the war was niggardly? Two answers may be given to this question. In the first place,

Perceval wrote both to Lord Wellington and Henry Wellesley to beg them to continue in Spain. His letter to Lord Wellington was very short, and need not be quoted. But his letter to Henry Wellesley contains a paragraph which ought to be decisive. 'I am certainly anxious,' he writes, 'to know what effect this determination of your brother's will have on you. I hope, when I assure you that it is the full determination of His Royal Highness and the Government *to persevere in their exertions in the cause of Spain,* that you will not find any reason from this event for wishing to retire from the mission in which we have been so well pleased and satisfied with your exertions.'[1]

So little then did Perceval imagine that his niggard support of the war could be the reason of Lord Wellesley's resignation, that he quoted his determination to persevere in the war as a reason for expecting the assistance of Lord Wellesley's brother. More than twenty-three years afterwards, one of Perceval's sons appealed from Napier's strictures to the great Duke himself. The following was the Duke's reply:—

'*London, June* 6, 1835.

'Dear Sir,—I received last night your letter of the 5th. Notwithstanding my great respect for Colonel Napier and his work, I have never read a line of it, because I wished to avoid being led into a literary controversy which I should

[1] Perceval MSS.

probably find more troublesome than the operations which it is the design of the Colonel's work to describe and record.

'I have no knowledge, therefore, of what he has written of your father, Mr. Spencer Perceval. Of this I am certain that I never, whether in public or private, said one word of the minister, or of any minister, except in praise of them; that I have repeatedly declared in public my obligation for the cordial support and encouragement which I received from them; and I should have been ungrateful and unjust, indeed, if I had excepted Mr. Perceval, than whom a more honest, zealous, and able minister never served the King.

'It is true that the army was in want of money, that is to say, specie, during the war. Bank-notes could not be used abroad, and we were obliged to pay for everything in the currency of the country which was the seat of the operations. It must not be forgotten, however, that at that period the bank was restricted from making its payments in specie. That commodity became therefore exceedingly scarce in England, and very frequently was not to be procured at all. I believe that, from the commencement of the war in Spain up to the lamented death of Mr. Perceval, the difficulty of procuring specie was much greater than it was found to be from the year 1812 to the end of the war; because, at the former period, all intercourse with the Continent was suspended; in the latter, as soon as the war with Russia commenced, the communication with the Continent was in some degree restored, and it became less difficult to procure specie.

'But it is obvious that, for some cause or other, there was a want of money in the army, as the pay of the troops was six months in arrear—a circumstance which had never been heard of in a British army in Europe; and large sums were due in different parts of the country for supplies, means of transport, &c.

'Upon other points referred to in your letter, I have really no recollection of having made complaints. I am convince that there was no real ground for them; and I must re

that, throughout the war, I received from the King's servants every encouragement and support it was in their power to give.

'Believe me, etc.

'WELLINGTON.

'Dudley Montagu Perceval, Esq.'

After this letter it must at any rate be obvious that, whatever may have been the cause of Lord Wellesley's resignation, Lord Wellington, the first authority, was not dissatisfied with the support of the war. Stapleton, in his life of Canning, assures us of the same thing.[1] Lord Wellesley's resignation, he tells us, was 'much to the annoyance of his brother, Lord Wellington, *who thought his complaints against Perceval unfounded.*' We must then, at once, dismiss the gravest of all the charges which Lord Wellesley's retirement has occasioned against Perceval. Did Lord Wellesley then resign on the Catholic claims? Here, again, we have negative evidence to the contrary effect. Through all the correspondence between Perceval and Lord Wellesley there is no allusion to the case of the Roman Catholics. But this part of the case cannot be decided by negative evidence alone. To understand the position of the Roman Catholic question in 1812, it is necessary to enter into some detail.

From the very earliest period of the Session the debate on the claims of the Roman Catholics had

[1] Page 196.

been anticipated with considerable interest. For eleven years the Church of Rome had been constantly urging her just pretensions for a removal of the disabilities under which her members were labouring; but for eleven years the most enthusiastic Roman Catholic had been aware that he had not at that time the faintest prospect of even partial success. The resignation of Pitt had been followed by the King's illness; the King's illness had indisposed all public men to take any really serious steps towards effecting concessions. Once a-year Fox or Grattan delivered with great earnestness an elaborate essay on the subject from the Opposition benches; once a-year Perceval, or some other prominent member on the Tory side, restated the stock arguments for excluding their Roman Catholic fellow-citizens from the rights of citizenship; and once a-year the House decided, by various but always enormous majorities, that Perceval was in the right, and that Grattan was in the wrong.

In 1812, however, the Roman Catholic Question wore, for the first time, a new aspect. All parties had practically agreed that during the reign of George the Third the subject should be postponed; but in 1812 the reign of George the Third was, to all intents and purposes, concluded. The King was hopelessly ill. The slight prospect which had been held out during the preceding summer of his recovery had faded away. The Regent was in possession of the throne, just as much King as if his

father had been removed from the troubles and sorrows which it was his lot for another eight years to endure. But the Regent, so far as he had any settled opinion on the subject, was understood to be in favour of concession. He had been surrounded ever since he came of age by members of the great Whig party; and the Whigs were willing to remove the disabilities which the Tories insisted on maintaining. It was then reasonable to suppose that the Regent would inaugurate his rule by reasonable concessions. It was at any rate evident that the subject would be discussed on its merits. The result of the discussion seemed the more likely to be favourable to the Catholics, because it was supposed that the Ministry were themselves divided on the question. Lord Buckingham's nameless correspondent told him on the 21st January, first, that the Prince had made up his mind to the amelioration of the condition of the Catholics in a very material degree, if not totally, as the first act of his government; second, that the present Government will come to an irreparably wide breach upon this question.[1] In very similar language the Speaker, five days before, had recorded in his Diary, 'That the present ministers would certainly split upon the Catholic Question, and that Lord Wellesley was for concession, &c., but that Perceval was for a peremptory and perpetual exclusion of all hope of

[1] Regency, i. 193.

change in their condition;' and three days afterwards, 'That the political dissensions in the Ministry were now come to an issue; and Lord Wellesley, who had never attended or voted upon the Catholic Question, would go down and speak for the concessions on Friday next.'[1]

In the meanwhile the Ministers had themselves consulted the Irish Government. The Duke of Richmond was the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Lord Wellesley's own brother, Wellesley Pole, was the Chief Secretary. In 1804 Perceval, we have already seen, had had his earlier opinions strengthened by the communications which he had received from the then Lord Chancellor of Ireland, Lord Redesdale. Singularly enough, in 1812, his chief supporter against Lord Wellesley was Lord Wellesley's own brother. In 1804 Lord Redesdale had resisted Emancipation, because it was, in his judgment, only the stepping-stone to further demands. The Irish Government, in 1812, used precisely similar arguments to those which Lord Redesdale had employed. On the last day of 1811, Wellesley Pole drew up a remarkable paper on the Catholic Question. The paper was addressed to Ryder, the Secretary of State; but it was evidently intended for the use of the Cabinet generally. Its contents are so important as an explicit statement of the views of the Irish Government that it must be produced at length.

[1] Colchester, ii. 354 and 356.

Memorandum most Secret and Confidential.

'*Phœnix Park*, '31*st December*, 1811.

'The state of the public mind in Ireland renders it of the first importance that the Prince Regent should come to a final conclusion respecting the claims of the Roman Catholics, and, when His Royal Highness has formed his decision, it seems indispensable that His Royal pleasure should be publicly communicated in a shape which will leave no doubt whatever that the declaration contains the settled opinion and determination of the Prince Regent; not an acquiescence on his part in advice given to him by his present servants, which may be retracted on any change of administration; but his own Royal view of the Catholic question, formed upon a full consideration of the subject in all its bearings.

'In order to show the necessity for the measure, it is proper to lay before His Royal Highness a short statement of the internal situation of Ireland, as it is affected by the agitation of the public mind upon the claims of the Roman Catholics.

'From the year 1801 to the present moment, the Roman Catholics of Ireland have been taught to believe that the only bar to the admission of their claims was the scruple of the King; and they have looked to the death of the King or the establishment of an unlimited Regency, as the period of the restrictions of which they complain. The notion that Mr. Pitt, and a great part of his administration, were favourable to them, led them to expect that, if the King were out of the way, there would be a sort of coalition in the House of Commons in their favour.

'The first check which this opinion met with was the letter of Lord Grenville to Lord Fingall on the veto. At first Lord Grenville's doctrine was countenanced by some of the best disposed among the Catholics, and most of the Catholic bishops; but, in a very short time, not only the

veto, but any interference whatever on the part of the Crown or Legislature in spiritual matters, was completely scouted; and upon no point are the Catholics now so unanimous as they are against the veto, or the arrangement as it is called by Lord Grenville. Nor has any man in the United Kingdom been more abused, or execrated, by the whole body, than Lord Grenville has for the last two years. This refusal to listen to the veto gave a check to their hopes of being quite so triumphant as they expected to have been. Many sober members of Parliament, who thought something should have been conceded, if the establishment could be secured, would not hear of any concession without an arrangement for that purpose.

'In this state the question has been two or three times debated, but without any expectation on the part of the Roman Catholics that the debate would be anything more than a field-day for the orators on the different sides of the cause—a Catholic speech from Mr. Grattan, a Protestant speech from the Treasury Bench, an extrication by Mr. Ponsonby from the labyrinth he had been placed in by Dr. Milner, and the usual, general, and violent assertions from some of the Irish members. So the matter has ended, and so it was expected to end. But every discussion was in reality mischievous. Something more dangerous appeared in each debate, and, in the last, the Repeal of the Tests was boldly asked for all Dissenters in the United Kingdom, and all the Roman Catholics desire was demanded for the English Catholics.

'This was made use of in Ireland as a proof of the increasing liberality of the English nation; and then comes a dinner of the Friends of Religious Liberty in London, at which Lord Moira and Mr. Sheridan, supposed to be high in the Regent's confidence, make speeches, carrying the idea of granting privileges to the Irish Roman Catholics to the widest extent. These matters reported, reprinted in the Irish papers attached to the Catholics, and circulated throughout

Ireland with comments to suit the purpose, emboldened the Catholics to proceed with redoubled ardour.

'Encouraged by the Protestant Members of Parliament in Opposition; by many Protestant Peers; and by the partisans of the Opposition Members of Parliament in their several counties; also by a very large body of the resident Protestant country gentlemen throughout Ireland, who are, generally speaking, either from alarm or supineness, favourable to their claims; and flattered by assurances of support to all their claims from persons who give themselves out as being, and are believed, almost universally in Ireland, to be, in the Regent's confidence; the Roman Catholics have advanced their pretensions of late with a boldness, and in a menacing manner, unknown to former times; they have set at defiance the law of the land: first disobeying and ridiculing the Proclamation of the Lord Lieutenant in Council, and next disputing the law against the unanimous decision of the Court of King's Bench, and acting in direct violation of that decision, and open contempt of the Executive Government. Although they have, by every trick and quirk their most ingenious lawyers could devise, endeavoured to evade the law in every particular, yet have they been most assiduous and eager to bring into hostility with the Government their whole body at meetings in every part of Ireland; and, having in fact and reality created a convention of their three estates, which they resolved on the 9th of July last should be elected, they, in the very teeth of the law and of the Executive Government, attempted to establish its authority in the very heart of the metropolis, having first held a general meeting at a dinner on the 19th instant, to which they used every possible means of collecting the Protestants of all descriptions who had in any way given them at any time support; and, having contrived at that dinner to make all the Protestants who attended it parties to an insult to the representative of the Crown in Ireland, with the display of strength and countenance which this

public dinner exhibited, they seemed to have hoped that the Government would have been afraid to grapple; and they, accordingly, four days after met in their convention in great numbers, with as many Protestants present as they could get to attend them. The Government, not being intimidated by their proceeding, put the law in force, as they had apprised Lord Fingall in July they would infallibly do, and dispersed the meeting. The consequence has been the assembly of an aggregate meeting consisting of almost 2000 people, including the convention, at which, by a quibble, the general committee in convention was continued under the name of a board, and at which a set of resolutions were entered into unanimously, openly maligning, censuring, and abusing the Government, and holding out a threat that the Roman Catholics will withdraw from the army and navy if their demands are not complied with. At this meeting, too, some Protestants attended, and spoke in a strain of encouragement to the Catholics to persevere in their abuse of the Government and their disobedience to the laws.

'Lest any doubt should arise in the minds of the public as to the nature of the Catholic demands on the day of the dinner, the Committee of Grievances, which had been appointed last year by the General Committee of the Catholics, published the first part of what they call "the Penal Laws that aggrieve the Catholics," &c. This work must be read in order to put any man in possession of the real demands of the Roman Catholics of Ireland at present; of the temper in which those demands are made; and of the terms upon which those demands are claimed. No attempt to describe the substance of this work can do it justice. It must be read; and I think he that reads it cannot plead ignorance of the extent of what the Roman Catholics of Ireland demand as their right, nor of the consequences that must follow the acquiescence in those demands. I will just observe that the claim amounts to *possession* of four-fifths of all the offices

civil, military, or political, belonging to Ireland; of four-fifths of the seats in the House of Commons, and four-fifths of the seats in the House of Lords, and indeed, of the Irish peerage; of four-fifths of all corporate offices, and of all corporate privileges;—I say *possession*, because I maintain that it is manifest that the grievance is not that in all cases the Catholics are not *eligible* by law, but that in fact they do not possess in the proportion to their numbers. The book tells us that there are 4 archbishops, 25 bishops, and 2000 Roman Catholic clergy without provision; that their congregations consist—not of a handful of gentry and tradesmen—but of an immense proportion of the people,—at least five-sixth parts—comprising persons of every order and degree in society. It does not say how the clergy are to be provided for, nor does it say that the archbishops or bishops are to sit in the House of Lords; but the inference is clear. We are told in the book that the Catholics occupy the most valuable positions, whether for commercial or military purposes; the boldest coasts; most navigable rivers; and most tenable passes; the most fertile districts; the richest supplies for forage; the readiest means of attack or defence; that already they make the great mass of the trading and manufacturing interests; that 30,000 of them are qualified to sit in Parliament; that they are as 10 to 1 to the members of the Established Church, and are emphatically called the People of Ireland; that the statute of 1793, professing to be an Act for the public relief of the Catholics of Ireland, has had expressly reserved, and re-enacted a great number of the most grievous privations, disabilities, and incapacities, which, however obsolete, heretofore existed in the Statute Book; that it was knowingly left defective; and there is scarcely an act of kindness which has been conferred that is not ridiculed as insulting; thus the College at Maynooth; and thus the elective and corporate franchises; Jail Act, &c. The demand is made of right to enjoy everything without any restraint or guard, and it would

be difficult if this right were admitted for any man to show how any attempt could be made to preserve any establishment, either in Church or State, upon any principle whatever; it must be merely according to the numbers of the different religions, and must in fact and practice come to four-fifths of the whole civil, military, political, and religious establishments being in the hands of the Catholics. May I doubt whether the succession to the throne, in the descendants of the Duchess Dowager of Hanover *being Protestants*, could be maintained an hour on principle if the doctrines in this book are conceded? There certainly can be no exclusive reason if numbers, and nothing else, are to be considered, why the King should be *a Protestant*, or why the succession should be limited as it was at the Revolution. Our Protestant rights in Ireland stand on the same foundation! The idea of any check, or guard for the Church establishment, is never once glanced at, nor does it seem *now* to be in the contemplation of any of the Roman Catholic leaders; it could not be named without personal danger to the speaker in any of their assemblies. This book could not have been read by the Protestants who attended the dinner on the 19th instant. Whether any intimate knowledge of its contents would have made any difference in their opinions, or in their attendance, I do not know. I have heard that some, who have since seen it, are a little staggered. I will not dwell further upon this book, but merely make one observation. I should wish those who read the book to consider, after they have settled in their own minds how far it goes to the overthrow of the Protestant establishment in Ireland, whether or no, if the demands are granted, Parliamentary reform in its most extended shape, a repeal of the Union, and a separation from England, are or are not likely to follow? The Prince Regent, by being put in possession of this book, and by reference to the resolutions of the aggregate meeting of the 23rd instant, and the proceedings which have been held by the Catholics since the

9th of July, and are about to be held by them, will have a clear view of the extent of the Catholic claims and of the temper in which they are now made. It will be for His Royal Highness to decide what is to be done upon them, but it is absolutely necessary that he should decide speedily, for no man can say what may be the consequence, if the question remains much longer in its present state of doubt and suspense.

'It must be remembered that the Irish Government are left entirely under the orders of the British Cabinet, to their own energy and firmness in resisting the attempts on the part of the Catholics to transgress the law, and that they can do no more than preserve the public tranquillity. They have no support out-of-doors, and they have no Parliament sitting in Ireland to assist them with its authority. Out of the thirty-two counties in Ireland at least twenty-two are so occupied by a Catholic interest that it would be in vain to hope for any support from them by way of address or resolutions The representatives are, for the most part, in the hands of Catholic freeholders, and they could not take a part with Government on such an occasion. Upon a close review of the counties I am of opinion that, at most, not more than seven could be got to go heartily against Catholic claims, and one or two of these would be divided. It is therefore only with the declared, avowed, unequivocal opinion of the Regent (which must be so publicly known that no man affecting to be in his confidence can presume to doubt or deny it), and with the steady authority of Parliament, that any person intrusted with the affairs of Ireland can hope to allay the ferment this question has created.

'W. W. Pole.'

Wellesley Pole sent this document to Ryder in the following letter:—

('*Private and confidential.*)

'*Phœnix Park*, 31 *December*, 1811.

'My dear Ryder,—I send you a memorandum which I have drawn up on the state of the public mind on Catholic claims, &c. &c. &c. Upon sending the book, which accompanies the memorandum, the Lord Lieutenant expresses his opinion of it to be exactly coincident with mine. I have shown his Grace my memorandum, and he has desired me to tell you that he heartily approves of it, and that it contains his sentiments. I commit it to you to do with it what you please. I have drawn it from a deep sense of public duty.

'Ever yours most truly,

'W. W. Pole.'[1]

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[1] 'The history of this document is peculiar. A year and a half after it was written Wellesley Pole changed his opinions, and made a strong speech in the House in favour of the Catholics. His old colleagues, with an evident desire to twit him with his change of opinion, searched high and low for his memorandum; and, after some trouble, Ryder, to whom it had been addressed, found it, and sent it to Peel, who was then Chief Secretary for Ireland. Peel forwarded it to the Duke of Richmond, writing at the end of it, "So much for consistency!" and the Duke very characteristically answered,—

' '*April* 16, 1813.

'My dear Peel,—I return you Pole's paper "drawn from a deep sense of public duty."

'It is difficult to suppose this to be the document in question, and yet as it is his last on that subject it must be so. I defy any body to doubt for a moment that he was then convinced that nothing but determination on the part of the Crown to support the Protestant influence, without giving way in the slightest degree to the Catholic claims, would quiet Ireland or keep up the connexion between the two countries.

'His stating in the House, subsequent to this document, that

If then the Catholic question was really the cause of Lord Wellesley's resignation, it follows that he was retiring because the Cabinet was acting on the views of his next brother. But it is almost insulting to Lord Wellesley's reputation to venture to urge this as the chief reason of his resignation. Lord Wellesley had always on principle been in favour of emancipation. Yet he had joined Perceval's Government. Fourteen days after his resignation he made a very long and able speech in the House of Lords on the Roman Catholic claim. What was the contention of

the Catholics did not avow the Book of Grievances is ridiculous. Parnel asserted that he knew every word of them to be true; and every Catholic meeting in Ireland openly avowed them, and paid compliments to the author.

'Pole tells Ryder in his note that I have desired him to say I heartily approved of his paper. I did so; and the difference between us is that I continue to approve of what he has abandoned. If I should ever speak on this subject in Parliament, I shall certainly borrow some of his cast-off arguments. They really are too good to be thrown away.

'I should not be surprised if, when you inform him on some further occasion in the House of Commons that the document is found, he should move for its production.

'I hope he may; and that his note to Ryder may accompany it; as it will show that I had then the same feelings I now have on it. Pray thank Ryder from me for sending me this precious *morceau*.

'Yours very sincerely,
'RICHMOND.'

Peel, on the 22nd, returned the document to Ryder with the Duke's letter; and Ryder, I imagine, must have handed the whole of the papers years afterwards to his friend, Mr. Dudley Perceval, by whom they were placed with his father's MSS.

this speech ?[1] First, that the claims of the Catholics ought ultimately to be conceded; and second, that the particular moment was an improper one for the concession. While Lord Wellesley was delivering this argument to the House of Lords, Lord Castlereagh was addressing a precisely similar conclusion to the House of Commons. And Lord Castlereagh was Lord Wellesley's successor at the Foreign Office. Lord Castlereagh's acceptance of office proves that Lord Wellesley's retirement from it on this ground was unnecessary.[2]

If then Lord Wellesley's resignation was not due

[1] Hansard, xxi. 431.

[2] On the evening on which this debate had occurred in the House of Lords, Lord Morpeth drew attention to the state of Ireland in the House of Commons; and proposed that the House should resolve itself into a Committee on the subject. The motion led to a two nights' debate. Canning, on the first night, declared for the concessions with securities, but not *now* in this moment of turbulence. Castlereagh, on the second night, delivered a similar opinion. Perceval spoke late, and did not sit down till four o'clock on the Thursday morning; but, even at that late hour, the House submitted to a long speech from Grattan. At half-past five ministers had a majority of 229 votes to 135, and the House adjourned. (Hansard, xxi. 669.)

The matter did not end here. Petitions were presented, in the month of April, from Roman Catholics in all parts of Ireland and England, as well as from some Protestants in England, for the removal of the Roman Catholic disabilities. Grattan drew attention to the matter on the 23rd of April; and a two nights' debate again ensued. Perceval spoke late on the second evening. Government had a majority of 300 votes to 215. 'Probably,' says the Speaker, 'the largest number that ever attended on any division.' Hansard, xxii. 1039; Colchester, ii. 377.

to the insufficient support of the great war, or to the determined resistance of the Catholic claims, what is the cause to which it may be attributed?[1] Lord Wellesley's correspondence has no allusion to these subjects. His later letters, as we have seen, are all full of the same topic. He again and again urges the Regent's claims to a larger sum than Perceval was disposed to grant him. He again and again insists that 150,000*l.* and not 100,000*l.* should be

[1] 'Lord Wellesley, on resigning, told Lord Bathurst that he was willing to allow his son, Richard Wellesley, to decide for himself. "Your disposition," Perceval wrote to him, "to leave your son to act entirely as he may choose upon this occasion, I receive most gladly as a mark of kindness to myself for which I am very grateful. I shall therefore, unless I should hear from you to the contrary, feel myself at liberty in due time to endeavour to prevail upon Mr. Wellesley to continue to hold his present situation at the Treasury, in which I am persuaded he may at once be very usefully occupied in introducing himself into a general knowledge of the course of public business, and also be affording me the most essential assistance." "Your disposition towards Richard," replied Lord Wellesley on the following day, "is justly entitled to my sincere acknowledgments. I have not had an opportunity of conversing with him since I received your letter; but I am satisfied that he will be inclined to act in whatever manner may be thought by you most convenient for the Government, and that he will be ready to resign both his seat at the Treasury and in Parliament whenever you may wish it." Richard Wellesley, in accordance with this arrangement, continued to hold his seat at the Treasury till his father's resignation was actually completed. He then resigned; but was persuaded by Perceval to continue in Parliament. He felt himself, however, unable to vote for Perceval on Sir Thomas Turton's motion on the 27th of February; and, in consequence, resigned his seat for East Grinstead, to which he had been returned by the interest of the Treasury.'

voted to the Regent. Is it possible that Lord Wellesley had so committed himself to the Prince that he felt, when he was beaten in the Cabinet, that he was bound to resign? Is it possible that the paltry question, whether the Regent should receive 50,000*l.* more or less, formed the immediate ground of separation between Lord Wellesley and his colleagues? Lord Wellesley tendered his resignation to the Prince on the morning of the 16th January. Perceval proposed the Household resolutions on the evening of the same day. The coincidence may be accidental. It is, to say the least, singular.

But there is something more than the negative evidence which the correspondence supplies, or the concurrent testimony of a coincidence of dates to rely upon. Perceval sent a statement of the whole difference in the Cabinet to the Duke of Richmond; and desired him to show it to no one but Wellesley Pole, Lord Wellesley's brother. Wellesley Pole wrote to him himself on the last day of the year.

'The Lord Lieutenant' (so runs his letter) 'has shown me your letter and the papers you sent him. I congratulate you upon having settled the financial part of the unrestricted Regency in so satisfactory a manner. I think you have done more than could have been expected for the country, and I hope that the acquiescence of the Regent augurs well for our continuance in office; though I own I have little faith in the favourable sentiments of His Royal Highness towards us. But I am sure that the only worthy line to pursue is that which you have adopted; and that, while we conscientiously do our duty, we shall be certain of

enjoying what is infinitely more valuable than office or power. *I lament extremely that Lord Wellesley should have differed with the Cabinet, and I am still more sorry he thought it necessary the Regent should know it. Whatever any man's opinion might be upon the propriety of granting* 50,000*l.* *more or less, I should have thought that, if all the Cabinet but one were agreed, that one had better have given way, and desired that the Act should have been carried to the Regent as the unanimous decision of the Cabinet;* but I do not know what Lord Wellesley's ideas on the subject are, as I have not heard from him.'

Here then we have distinct proof, first, that Lord Wellesley differed from the rest of the Cabinet on the amount of the grant to the Regent; second, that he thought his difference so important that he took the unusual course of communicating it to the Regent; and third, that his conduct in this respect was disapproved by his own brother. Is it not after this evidence, to say the least, probable that the date of his resignation was not a mere coincidence; and that his retirement was immediately due to the paltry differences between the Cabinet and himself on the Household grant?

The difference about the grant to the Prince was of course only the last straw. The load on Lord Wellesley had been long intolerable. Born to command, he had not the patience to yield; and his high nature chafed at the repeated discomfitures to which he had to submit in the Cabinet. He had persuaded himself that he should be first, and could not brook being second. It is possible that he may have

imagined that his resignation would have brought matters to a crisis, and that it would have led to his own accession to the Treasury. Perceval contemplated in fact retirement, and was only dissuaded from retiring by the advice of Lord Arden. 'Negotiate,' said his brother, 'but don't resign. Your negotiations will be more likely to succeed if you are in office than if you are out of it.' The result proved the justice of Lord Arden's remark. The Regent shrank from the responsibility of dismissing from his councils the greatest debater in the House of Commons, and the most popular Minister since the days of Pitt.

'Lord Liverpool' (Perceval wrote to Lord Wellington on the 22nd January) 'has been so good as to engage to write to you upon this subject in more detail, and therefore I think it is unnecessary for me to do more than state that I have received His Royal Highness's directions to submit to him the arrangement which I may think best to supply the loss which his counsels will sustain in the retirement of your brother; that *His Royal Highness has no intention of looking to any other person for forming the Administration at present than myself, nor of looking to any change of it, at the approaching period of the expiration of the restrictions of his Regency, but such as I may find necessary.*'

Lord Wellesley's resignation involved greater difficulties, because it had been preceded by that of another member of the Cabinet. For very different reasons from those which had influenced Lord Wellesley, Charles Yorke had resigned in the previous autumn.

'As the subject of the Royal Household and Civil List of the Prince Regent,' he wrote to Perceval on the 15th December, 'appears now to be in a fair train of adjustment, I presume it may now be considered as settled that His Royal Highness has most wisely decided on continuing you at the head of his future administration, with all that assurance of confidence and support which is due to that situation. The country will, in my opinion, have ample reason to congratulate itself on such an event, and I earnestly hope that there may always be wisdom enough in a certain quarter to value your able and honest advice and service as it deserves.

'The time then appears to be arrived when I find myself under the painful necessity of reminding you of the conversation I have had with you long ago, both before and since the end of the last Session, respecting myself; and of again expressing to you, with great regret, that the state of my health and spirits is such as to render it impossible for me, with any degree of comfort and satisfaction, to continue to discharge the duties of this office, and to bear up against the constant confinement and anxiety of it, at the same time with the wear and tear of mind and body which belongs to an unremitting attendance in the House of Commons, such as is now required. I am really unequal to the performance of both these services in the manner which, in my conscience, I think they ought to be performed—a melancholy idea, which constantly preys upon me, and which at times makes me extremely unhappy.

'I must, therefore, earnestly request the favour of you to take a proper opportunity of submitting my most humble duty to the Prince Regent, and of soliciting for me his gracious permission to retire from his service, assuring His Royal Highness at the same time on my behalf of those sentiments of loyalty and duty towards his person and Government which I am ever bound to entertain.

'I do not wish to advert to certain circumstances (of

which you are in some measure apprised) which, according to the ideas I entertain of what belongs to my present situation, do not tend to lessen my anxieties, or to subdue unpleasant feelings of a personal nature; neither will I refer more particularly to some others (which, indeed, are obvious enough), and which have so entirely changed the state of affairs, since my being called to the Admiralty, as fairly to justify any one who had been accustomed to serve *His Majesty*, and had long ago determined never to engage in any other service, for wishing to decline to hold such a situation in the administration of the Regent.

. . . . . .

'I have already mentioned to you that, as it is my earnest desire to avoid as much as possible causing any embarrassment to you in making the requisite arrangements for the Admiralty on my retirement, I should wish to learn the precise time of completing them to your convenience, though it would appear to me that they should, if practicable, take place previous to the meeting of Parliament. If this, however, should be deemed inconvenient, I am ready to continue where I am until the final settlement and termination of the limited Regency .... but I must earnestly entreat that nothing may be suffered to delay the accomplishment of my relief beyond that period when His Royal Highness will be able to assume the possession of all the powers and functions of executive government.'

It seems fair then to say that Lord Wellesley had resigned because he liked the Regent too much; that Charles Yorke had retired because he trusted His Royal Highness too little. Yorke was prevailed on for the moment to withdraw his resignation. Lord Wellesley continued to transact the business of his office for a few weeks more. The Prince was

desirous to delay the conclusion of any ministerial arrangements till the restrictions of the Regency Bill expired; and these restrictions did not terminate till the 18th February. On the 13th of that month, the Prince wrote his famous letter to 'My dearest brother,' the Duke of York; in which, after reviewing the successes which had been achieved in the war, he went on: 'I have no predilections to indulge, no resentments to gratify, no objects to attain, but such as are common to the whole empire.' 'I cannot conclude without expressing the gratification I should feel if some of those persons with whom the early habits of my public life were formed would strengthen my hands and constitute a part of my government.' 'You are authorised to communicate these statements to Lord Grey, who, I have no doubt, will make them known to Lord Grenville.'[1]

[1] The secret history of this famous letter was very singular. The original suggestion of a letter seems to have emanated from Perceval. There is a memorandum in his handwriting among his papers commencing, 'Might not His Royal Highness the Duke of York be directed to make an explanation to Lords Grey and Grenville? The direction to be given in a letter from the Prince Regent to the Duke, which H.R.H. might read to them.' Then follows the rough draft of a letter explaining the reasons which had influenced the Regent in making no change in his councils. Both the Cabinet and the Regent apparently approved the suggestion; for there is a second MS. among the Perceval Papers, headed, in the minister's handwriting, 'Draft of letter prepared pursuant to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent's directions,' which, after describing the state of the war, concludes, 'Under these circumstances, therefore, I have thought it became me rather to sacrifice those considerations of personal regard which I still

Two days after the date of this letter, the two lords sent a point-blank refusal to the Regent's proposal, and the Regent immediately continued Perceval as his Minister. Perceval, who had anticipated the reply, wrote, three days after it had been sent, to Lord Castlereagh. 'You will have seen,' he wrote on the 18th February, 'in the papers that there has been a communication between the Prince and Lords Grey and Grenville; that they have rejected the overture made to them . . . and that, upon that rejection, His Royal Highness desired me to consider myself as continuing his Minister. This day His Royal Highness has accepted Lord Wellesley's resignation, and has authorised me to renew my conversation with you upon the subject of your

entertain, and which might otherwise have influenced my conduct, than to abandon, as I must necessarily have done, by a total change of the Administration, those principles of policy, which, whatever might be the case in any other situation of affairs, appears to me under all the circumstances of the present moment, most conducive and essential to the welfare of the country.' This draft was certainly the basis of the Prince's famous letter to the Duke of York. But, by the time he received it, His Royal Highness had changed his mind again. He had the inconceivable folly of altering a letter, explanatory of the reasons which prevented him from applying to Lords Grey and Grenville, into an application to those two lords. No result but one could possibly have ensued. Lord Grey and Lord Grenville regarded the application as an insult, and returned immediately a point-blank refusal to it. It is worth while comparing this account with that which Lord Buckingham received from his nameless correspondent, 'Regency,' i. p. 257. The latter was certainly well informed; but, so far as I can ascertain, was never quite exact in his information.

giving your assistance to his Government. I know not whether you intend being in town to-morrow to attend the Irish Finance Committee, but, if you should on that account, or any other, come to town, I should certainly be glad to have an early opportunity of seeing you. I have told the Prince that till I see you, and converse fully with you upon this subject, I shall not think of making any overture in any other quarter.'

Castlereagh desired, if we may believe a passage in Plumer Ward's Diary, to return to his old office.[1] But Lord Liverpool had already written to Perceval to state that, in the then state of the war, he could not consent to any change in his own situation.[1] Lord Castlereagh was therefore compelled to take the Foreign Office.

[1] 'At Lord Wellesley's secession, however,' Perceval wrote to Lord Lonsdale, 'it was not sufficient to look merely for a successor to him. Yorke had suffered so much in his health and nerves by the perpetual anxiety, fatigue, and care of the Admiralty, that he was incessant in his applications to be released; he was contented, however, to stay till after the restrictions were at an end, and I prevailed upon him, though with great difficulty, to remain till the Easter recess. A successor, therefore, to him was as essential a part of the arrangement as one for Lord Wellesley. Lord Camden had always given me to understand that his situation was at my disposal whenever it could be employed to give strength to the Government. Rose also had com-

[1] Lord Liverpool to Perceval, 17 Feb. 1812.

municated to me through Lord Bathurst his desire to be released from the fatigues of office, which he found too heavy for his age and health; and there were two vacant situations—one at the Admiralty, one at the Treasury Board. These latter circumstances I do not mention as additional difficulties in our way. They are necessary, however, to be mentioned in the description of our situation. We were thus situated in regard to our offices when the Prince, on the 18th of January, told me that Lord Wellesley had resigned, although he had expressed his readiness to continue till the restrictions were at an end, or longer if convenient to the Government. It cannot be denied that Lord Wellesley's character and talents carried great weight with them, and his retirement could not but shake the strength and probable stability of the Government. Our Household arrangements were not completed in Parliament; a motion respecting Ireland and the Roman Catholics was coming on the next week; and what the Prince intended to do with us was wholly matter of conjecture. Under these circumstances I told the Prince I could not be answerable for what might happen in Parliament, unless he would authorise me to fill up our ranks, &c.[1] That it was not only Lord Wellesley who was leaving us, but Mr. Yorke also, and that Lord Wellesley would probably unite with Canning, and both together too probably fling their weight into the Opposition scale. He asked me what I would propose to do? I

[1] This is evidently the true explanation—and it is obviously a sufficient one—of the complaint which Lord Wellesley made that Perceval endeavoured to induce the Regent to move his Lordship before the close of the restrictions. (Hansard, xxxiii. 376.) The fact is Lord Wellesley resigned, not because he desired to go out, but because he desired to thrust out Perceval; and so he complained—as in no other case could he have complained—of Perceval's desire to fill up the ranks of the Ministry immediately after his resignation.

said, in the first instance, to apply to Lord Castlereagh. This he thoroughly and unequivocally approved, and authorised me accordingly to apply to him. I then mentioned Lord Sidmouth and his friends, to which at first he made considerable objections—some personal, others public; of the latter principally was Lord Sidmouth's known opinion on the Roman Catholic question, which, as that question was expected to come on in a few days, would convey an injurious impression of the Prince's opinion and determination upon it, if Lord Sidmouth was taken in at that time. At length I agreed to postpone applying to any one but Lord Castlereagh till I had seen his lordship .... I saw him. He was most averse to giving any consideration to the proposal till the restrictions were at an end; thought that the Government would want some unequivocal proof of the Prince's confidence, which would in his opinion only be obtained by endeavouring to engraft into it some of those to whom the Prince was known to be personally attached; and, in short, though he would not let the Prince be run down for want of his assistance, he did not wish to give it unless there was a prospect of the Government being materially strengthened. I repeated this to the Prince. The Prince determined nothing should be done further by me till after the restrictions were at an end, and expressly countermanded the authority he had before given me of proceeding to strengthen our administration. So matters stood (under my protest of not being able to answer for what might happen any day in Parliament) till after the issue of the Prince's communication with Lords Grey and Grenville. I believe that the Prince's idea was that, under the influence of his superintendence, a Government might have been formed by him which might have united the leading parties of the State—a hopeless idea, I most certainly think; but, however, if he thought otherwise, perhaps it would have been as well, at least for public impression, if those to whom it was suggested had received it in such a

manner as might have put the possibility of the arrangement to the test, when, if it had failed, the grounds of its necessary failure would have been evident. But, undoubtedly, without great retrocession on one part, or the other, or both — which could not reasonably be expected on either part—nothing could have come of it. The project, however, failed, without involving the existing Government in any part of it. When it had failed, the Prince immediately told me I was to consider myself as continuing to be his minister, and must make my arrangements. I immediately proceeded to see Castlereagh, and communicated with Lord Sidmouth. Every other party in the State, except our own, being now decidedly hostile, it appeared to me that it would not have been doing justly by the Prince, or ourselves, or the country, if I did not endeavour to secure, by means of Lord Sidmouth's co-operation, a Government that partook of the strength which his friends could afford us, and in this opinion the whole Cabinet concurred. Lord Sidmouth considered himself so connected with Lord Buckinghamshire, Bragge-Bathurst, and Vansittart, that he would not hear of any arrangement which did not include him, Lord Buckinghamshire, and Bragge-Bathurst in the Cabinet. This proportion in the Cabinet (I say this in perfect confidence) several of our friends have thought excessive; they were not, it seems, aware that he was likely to have pressed for it, and have felt it objectionable. However, the arrangement depended upon it. As far as I am concerned myself, I must say that I had long known that such was Lord Sidmouth's connexion with Lord Buckinghamshire and Bragge-Bathurst, that he would not be in any Government on any other terms. Under these circumstances then, after a good deal of discussion, the arrangement which has taken place is as follows: Lord Sidmouth comes into Lord Camden's place, who, however, remains with us in the Cabinet till the end of the Session—a circumstance particularly advantageous, as it marks his

perfect agreement in his official removal. And, when the Prince shall be advised to give any step in the Peerage, His Royal Highness has given him to understand that he shall be made a Marquis (this point you will have the goodness to keep to yourself at present); Lord Melville succeeds Yorke at the Admiralty, and brings in William Dundas to the vacant seat at the Board of Admiralty, and Admiral Hope in the room of ——— ? who is to be Port Admiral at Portsmouth. Lord Buckinghamshire succeeds Lord Melville at the India Board, and Vansittart comes, after the recess, into the vacant seat at the Treasury. Rose has desired to stay in his present office till two months after the Session, when he will execute his purpose of retiring, and Bragge-Bathurst will succeed him, and come into the Cabinet.

'In addition to this, I should tell you prospectively that the Duke of Richmond is very tired of his situation in Ireland. He will stay, however, at my request some time longer, certainly over the Session. Pole will not stay in office under any other Lord Lieutenant; and he looks justly to some high official situation in this country, upon his retirement from his Irish Secretaryship. This can only be effected by the retirement of our friend Ryder, who has always expressed his wish to be relieved, whenever I could spare him or make any use of his office. I have always resisted this wish of his as much as I could, being persuaded that I could not get any one in his place, who would be half so useful to me in it as himself; and, indeed, I shall never cease to regret his retirement. But, known as his wish upon this subject is to everyone, and strong as Pole's claims are upon me in consequence of his firm adherence under recent circumstances, and his very considerable abilities, I could not leave Pole to retire without an office, without his feeling that, if I wished it, I had the easy means not only of providing for him, but at the same time gratifying Ryder. I, therefore, could not fail to point to Ryder's

situation, as one which might be opened in the event of Pole's retiring from Ireland — not that in that event Pole would succeed Ryder; Bathurst would, as I conceive, in that event, come into Ryder's place, and Pole become Treasurer of the Navy.'[1]

Such were the arrangements to which Lord Wellesley's and Charles Yorke's retirements eventually led. On the very day, on which Lord Wellesley's resignation was accepted, the Prince Regent, by Perceval's advice, sent a message to the Commons, announcing that he had made Lord Wellington an Earl, and recommending him for an addition of 2000*l.* a-year to his pension. The intended promotion had been communicated by Perceval to Lord Wellesley a fortnight previous. 'Better advice,' wrote his Lordship in reply, 'was never given; and advice so good has seldom been so well received.' The House, Perceval wrote to Wellington himself, 'received the message with an acclamation of applause.' The increased pension was voted with the single dissentient voice of Sir F. Burdett.[2]

Long before this question had been decided, a very serious matter had attracted attention. Amongst the numerous sinecures which, it was intended, should be gradually abolished was the Paymastership of

[1] Perceval MSS.

[2] The thanks of the House, for the capture of Ciudad Rodrigo, had been voted in the previous week, on the 18th February. Hansard, xxi. 711, 883.

Widows' Pensions. Its abolition had been recommended twenty-nine years before by the Commissioners of Public Accounts; and the recent death of the holder of it—General Fox—had facilitated the fulfilment of this recommendation. Notwithstanding the recommendation, the Prince had bestowed the office on Colonel M'Mahon, a member of Parliament attached to his household; though he seems to have coupled his grant of it with a condition that it was to be held 'subject to any view that Parliament might take of it.'[1] Very early in the Session, on the 9th January, Creevey drew attention to the matter. But he was beaten, in a thin house, by a large majority.[2] Six weeks afterwards, when the House was in Committee on the Army Estimates, a more formidable opponent, Bankes, drew attention to the same subject. 'Bankes,' according to Plumer Ward was 'violent, but the cause of it completely put down by Perceval, who in a very manly way showed that under the circumstances no just cause of offence had been given to Parliament.' The Opposition were again beaten; but, only two days afterwards, again renewed the struggle. 'Perceval was ill, but made many good hits.' The country gentlemen, however, abandoned the Minister; Government was beaten by 115 votes to 112; and Colonel M'Mahon's salary expunged from the estimates.

The matter, however, did not end here. The

[1] Hansard, xxi. 117. [2] Ibid. 123.

Regent appointed M'Mahon his Private Secretary. The Opposition insisted that the appointment was unconstitutional. A very sharp debate ensued. But the Minister was on this occasion successful; and defeated his opponents by 176 votes to 100.[1]

The previous defeat had been the more serious because it had been accompanied by a reverse on a very similar subject. The House of Lords had in a previous session rejected the Bill, which Bankes had succeeded in carrying, to prevent the grant of offices in reversion. Bankes renewed his proposal early in 1812, and Perceval on the 7th February opposed the second reading 'from a sincere wish to preserve cordiality between the two branches of the legislature.' Bankes was beaten by a narrow majority of two—56 votes to 54. But it was hardly to be supposed that he would rest quiet under so narrow a defeat in so thin a house. He obtained leave on the 24th March to bring in a Bill for the abolition of Sinecure Offices; carried it successfully through its first and second readings and Committee; and beat the Ministry on a Division on Report by 134 votes to 123.[2]

The persistent manner in which Perceval fought questions of this description forms one of the most remarkable features of his administration; and, it must be added, one of the chief blots on his political character. It is perfectly true that it was a very

[1] Hansard, xxii. 363.

[2] Ibid. 1159.

different thing to defend a useless sinecure in 1810 from what such a defence would be now. Sinecures, in the early part of the century, formed a portion of the system of government. Every prominent public man was in enjoyment of one. Lord Buckingham was teller of the Exchequer. Lord Grenville an auditor of the Exchequer. Lord Liverpool, who had been nominally premier for a day, was Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. Perceval was the only Premier or ex-Premier alive, who had no such place to enjoy. He was a noble instance of denial in his own person of the principles of which he was the resolute champion. His championship of them was perhaps the more earnest from the circumstance that his own brother was enjoying as rich a sinecure as anyone. With an Opposition interested in maintaining the existing abuses, and a brother profiting from them, some excuse may perhaps be offered for Perceval's resolute defence of what was then supposed to be the prerogative of the Crown.

But for all this it is impossible to avoid regretting the course which Perceval took on all these questions. It subjected his Ministry to embarrassing defeats; it exposed his character to unfair insinuations. His best friends—men like Wilberforce and Plumer Ward—regretted his conduct at the time. His biographer must be permitted to regret it still.

The course, which Perceval took in this respect, is the more to be regretted from the circumstance that it more or less weakened his position in the House

of Commons. 'If he would only give into a few and moderate reforms,' said Ward, 'he would not only do good to the country, but would take the only game they had out of the hands of Opposition, and play it infinitely better, since he was a far greater favourite with the people.'[1] There was every reason, too, for strengthening the hands of the Government, since the Opposition were making persistent attacks on it. Some of these must be discussed in a succeeding chapter. Two only can be referred to now. On the 27th February Sir Thomas Turton moved for a Committee on the state of the nation. The motion led to a great struggle. Matthew Montague made a violent attack on the Opposition in general, and Whitbread in particular. 'He did not believe that they were capable of forming a more able, a less weak, or a less divided administration. . . . The Opposition was divided among themselves, and far from strong. Who was to be their leader? Who was fitter for the purpose than the present Prime Minister? . . . Suppose the honourable member for Bedford at the head of an administration. . . . He observed that that honourable member, and those who voted with him, seemed generally to select those times for their attacks upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer when it was not allowable by the practice of the House for him to answer them. . . . Single-handed the right honour-

[1] Ward, i. 444.

able gentleman had beaten all the talents.' The taunt drew out Whitbread, who answered Browne with great good-humour; admitted that 'no one was more convinced of Perceval's talents than he was;' but insisted that he would rather sink ten thousand fathoms deep than join any administration he could not approve. Whitbread's speech revived a drooping debate. Perceval 'humorously termed it a motion for a Committee to inquire into the state of parties;' but the motion was rejected by 209 votes to 136.

The other attack was more singular; and the Minister's majority was more narrow. The Ministry had determined to remedy some of the gross abuses of the billeting system by building three barracks; one at Marylebone (the present Regent's Park barracks); a second at Bristol; and a third at Liverpool. The Opposition opposed the proposal on two grounds — first, the expense the buildings would occasion; and second, the influence which the presence of troops would excite in the Metropolis. It can hardly be necessary to defend now a proposal to which no one would probably object. But, at that time, the Opposition actually succeeded in mustering 112 votes to 134.[1]

[1] Hansard, xxii. 1151.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ORDERS IN COUNCIL.

1812.

Two Serious Questions—Difficulties with America—The Orders in Council — The Crisis of 1811 — War of 1812 — Hopes of the Opposition — Canning — Committee on the Orders in Council — Perceval shot in the Lobby of the House of Commons — Apprehension of Bellingham — Provision for Perceval's Wife and Children — Funeral — His Character.

THOUGH it has hitherto been possible to refrain from any detailed allusion to the nice international questions which the great war with France had raised, it would be improper to bring this memoir to a conclusion without a somewhat careful consideration of the effects of our war policy on the enemy, on neutral nations, and on ourselves.

From the very beginning of the war two serious questions had arisen between the United States and this country. The first had reference to the fitting out of French Privateers in American Harbours; the second to the searching in American Vessels for deserters from the British Navy. It is not necessary to refer in detail to the first of these differences.

The second of them must be more or less clearly understood. The identity of the American language with our own naturally gave our seamen considerable facilities for pretending American citizenship; and these facilities were increased both by the pretensions and the practices of the American Government. The Government of the United States pretended that five years' residence in their territory was sufficient to convert an Englishman into an American; but in practice they were constantly in the habit of dispensing with this condition, and of granting certificates of citizenship to all applicants whether they had resided for five years or for only five minutes within their country. If our Navy had been recruited, as it is now, by voluntary enlistment, the claim of the United States would perhaps have only made a slight difference to us: we might have had some little difficulty in preventing desertion; but we should not have found it either more or less easy to procure seamen. But our seamen, during the great war, were taken by compulsion. The press-gang had a right to seize any English subject, and force him to serve the Crown. If he deserted, the Government claimed the right of following him to the ships of other nations and of seizing him thence. The United States, however, by granting certificates of naturalisation to all applicants, materially interfered with this practice. The British seaman, who had perhaps only five weeks before deserted from the King's service, claimed the benefits

of American citizenship. His claim became the more serious because the American Government insisted that the fact that he was serving under their flag gave him the benefit of their protection; that the nationality of the ship ought in short to prove the nationality of the crew.

There were then, from the earliest periods of the war, two sources of irritation between the United States and ourselves. We were annoyed at our Transatlantic cousins sanctioning the fitting out of French Privateers from their ports. They on the contrary resented our claim to search for deserters from the King's service on board their own ships. Matters had nearly reached a crisis during Pitt's second Ministry. The accession of Fox to power induced the Americans, however, to attempt to effect a peaceful solution of their differences with us. Munroe and Pinckney were deputed to negotiate a treaty with the English Government, and actually agreed on the terms of a convention which they signed. But, before their work was ratified, Fox was dead; the Talents Administration were supposed to be falling; and a Tory Government to be again imminent. The President of the United States refused to ratify the treaty which his envoys had concluded; and no practical result consequently ensued from the labours of the negotiators at London.

While matters were in this position, a new cause of difference arose. The Talents Administration in 1806 declared the whole of the Continental ports of

France and her allies in a state of blockade. Napoleon retaliated on the 21st October with his famous Berlin decree, in which 'he ventured to declare the British Islands in a state of blockade, and to interdict all neutrals from trading in any commodities whatsoever with a British port.'[1] The Talents Administration retaliated with the first of the orders in Council. Buonaparte upon this supplemented the Berlin with the Milan decree; and the Duke of Portland's Administration issued the order which has already been noticed in a previous portion of this memoir.

That the order in Council of November, 1807, was vexatious to neutral powers no one can doubt. It practically prohibited all direct trade with the Continent of Europe; it imposed a severe restriction both on the commerce and on the carrying trade of the United States. This result had, in fact, been foreseen by the Ministry. Perceval, in the very paper in which he had originated the order, had practically declared that he was moving, as far as was possible, without driving the American Government into hostilities. He had calculated on their preferring the limited trade, which the Orders would still allow them, to the absolute extinction of trade which war would probably involve. His conjectures were well founded. The Americans complained of the restrictions; they clamoured more than ever

[1] 'Pict. Hist.'

against the English Ministry; but they remained nominally at peace with the English nation.

A new difference had, however, in the meanwhile arisen. The Leopard, an English man-of-war, insisted on searching for deserters on board of the American Frigate, the Chesapeake. The American captain refused; the Englishman persisted; a smart action ensued, in which the Leopard sustained no loss; the Chesapeake surrendered; the English captain boarded her; removed from her four deserters, and sailed off. The account of the action reached England on the 2nd July, 1807. Canning, before any demand for redress had been made, disavowed the right to search ships in the *national* service of any country for deserters; offered suitable reparation; and returned two of the deserters who were proved to be citizens of the United States. But, notwithstanding this temperate conduct, the indignation of the Americans became extreme. Englishmen in America were exposed to every insult, and Congress suspended all intercourse with foreign nations.

Such at the close of 1807 were the deplorable results of the great war. The two chief belligerents had forbidden all neutral trade with their opponent; the chief neutral had excluded herself from all intercourse with every civilised nation. The state of things was partially modified in the succeeding years. The Americans, in December, 1808, substituted for their absolute embargo a non-intercourse act, pre-

cluding all communication with France and England while these two countries maintained their decrees. The English, in the spring of 1809, substituted a new order of Council for their order of 1807, by which the American trade was practically opened to 'the German Ocean, the Baltic, the foreign possessions of the Dutch, and part of Italy.'[1] The alteration was made to favour the American trade; but it made no difference in the feelings of the Americans; and though, in deference to their wishes, we changed our ambassador at Washington, and substituted Mr. Jackson for Mr. Erskine, the differences between the two countries were as wide as they had ever been.

Such is a rough view of the state of matters when Perceval succeeded the Duke of Portland at the Treasury, and Lord Wellesley replaced Canning at the Foreign Office. Lord Wellesley took up the threads of the negotiation which Canning had been weaving; and a long correspondence ensued between the two Governments. The Americans, in the meanwhile, induced the French Emperor to modify his decrees. Napoleon offered to withdraw both the Berlin and Milan decrees; adding, however, 'Bien entendu qu'en conséquence de cette déclaration les Anglais révoqueront leurs arrêts du conseil, et renonceront aux nouveaux principes de blocus qu'ils ont voulu établir.'[2]

[1] 'Pict. Hist.' viii. 552.

[2] Pearce's 'Wellesley,' iii. 133.

The American Envoy, with this concession in his pocket, approached Lord Wellesley. The French Emperor had now, he said, withdrawn his obnoxious decrees. The English Government would have no pretext for continuing their orders. Lord Wellesley must now see that it was time to repeal them.

Lord Wellesley seems to have hesitated on three grounds. First, he doubted whether there was any proof that the Emperor had really withdrawn his decrees. Second, he insisted that the withdrawal of the French Emperor was conditional on the action of the English Government. 'Bien entendu qu'en conséquence . . . les Anglais révoqueront leurs arrêts;' and third, he pointed out that the condition was more than the mere withdrawal of the orders, 'et renonceront aux nouveaux principes de blocus.' On the first point the American ambassador made, it must be admitted, a satisfactory answer. The withdrawal of the Berlin and Milan decrees had been notified in the 'Moniteur,' just as our own orders had been advertised in the 'Gazette.' If the notice in this country was sufficient, we could not fairly object to the similar notification of the French Emperor. On the second point the American ambassador's answer, though less conclusive, was probably sufficient. It was true, he argued, that the French Empire had withdrawn their decree on the understanding (*bien entendu*) that the English Government shall revoke the orders in Council, and renounce their new principles of blockade. But it

was nowhere stated that the validity of the decree was to be affected by the non-fulfilment of the condition. The withdrawal of the Berlin and Milan decrees was absolute; and, whatever the French Government might have understood when they resolved on this policy, the policy itself would not be affected by the subsequent proceedings of the English Ministry. In this respect the American arguments seem also to have been valid. But, on the third point, Lord Wellesley stood on firmer ground. The Berlin and Milan decrees and our own orders in Council might fairly be paired off one against the other. But the French insisted, on the revocation of their decrees, not merely on the repeal of our orders, but on our renunciation of our rights of blockade. The right of blockade, however, involved a totally different question from that which the Orders in Council had raised; and, however ready we might be to repeal the latter, we could not, as a great naval power, submit to the loss which the sacrifice of the former would involve. But the American ambassador had made up his mind that the repeal of the orders would be of little use to his fellow-countrymen unless it were accompanied with a relaxation of the blockade. Lord Wellesley was firm. His opponent would not yield an inch; and at the close of 1810 demanded his passports and left the country.

The withdrawal of the American ambassador, and the prospect which his withdrawal afforded of an

almost immediate rupture, naturally strengthened the hands of those politicians who had, from the first, disapproved the policy of the Orders in Council. Their objections seemed the more forcible from the circumstance that the monetary crisis of 1811 was attributed by some persons to the Orders in Council. The commercial classes insisted first that the Orders had had no really injurious effect on France. Second, that they were annihilating our own trade. Third, that they were involving an immediate rupture with the United States.

It would be impossible to defend the Orders in Council on abstract principles. Perceval himself never advocated their continuance on this ground. 'He had never spoken of the Orders in Council or the system of licenses, as eligible measures; on the contrary he thought them abstractedly ineligible; but they were forced upon the Government by existing circumstances.[1] Perceval was of course right. In theory all trade should be free, and everything that tends to fetter trade is objectionable. But, in practice, no nation in the civilised world has ever yet succeeded in securing an even approximately free trade. England, at the present moment, has probably done more than any other country to relieve her commerce of unnecessary restrictions; but England professedly derives nearly 20,000,000*l.* a-year from Customs duties. With the exception of a few extreme economists no one ventures to predict the repeal of

[1] Hansard, xv. 158.

these imposts. On the contrary, whatever opinion may be pronounced of taxes on articles of prime necessity, all parties are agreed that luxuries, such as wines, spirits, or tobacco, are proper objects of taxation. If, however, it be consequently legitimate to impose restrictions on trade for the sake of securing a certain amount of revenue for the country, must it not, *à fortiori*, be justifiable to fetter commerce for the sake of inflicting an injury on a national enemy? The immediate object of the Orders in Council was, it must be remembered, to damage the enemy. No one would probably be prepared to deny that, in this respect, they completely succeeded. Perceval incidentally mentioned on one occasion that the Customs duties of France had fallen from 60,483,000 francs in 1807 to 18,500,000 francs in 1808, and 11,500,000 francs in 1809; and there can be no doubt that the French suffered severely from the restricted intercourse with other countries which was the immediate result of our Orders in Council.[1]

It has, however, been stated that the injury which we inflicted on the enemy was dearly purchased; our own manufacturers and commercial classes suffered, it has been contended, equally severely. Such a statement must be either supported or negatived by actual figures: statistics alone can enable us to decide fairly upon it. In 1807, or the year which preceded Perceval's orders, the official value of our imports amounted to 25,326,845*l*. It rose in

[1] Hansard, xxi. 1157.

1808 to 25,660,953*l.*; in 1809 to 30,170,292*l.*; and in 1810 to 37,613,294*l.* Our exports for the same years tell exactly the same tale. Their declared value in 1807 was 36,394,443*l.*, and, though they fell in 1808 to 36,306,385*l.*, they rose in 1809 to 46,049,777*l.*; and in 1810 to 47,000,926*l.* So far then as the statistics of our trade for the four years, which immediately succeeded the Orders in Council, are concerned, there is no reason for supposing that the Orders had exercised an injurious effect. On the contrary, trade was unprecedently prosperous: its growth was far more rapid than anything which had ever previously been witnessed in this country.

This state of things, however, was modified in the following year. Our imports in 1811 fell from 37,613,294*l.* to 25,240,904*l.* Our exports from 47,000,926*l.* to 30,850,618*l.* Politicians endeavoured to account for the change; and they hit upon the unhappy Orders as the prime cause of it. With the figures of the previous years before them they did not venture indeed to declare that the Orders were the direct offenders: they attributed the loss of trade to the American Non-intercourse Act; the latter was obviously due to the Orders themselves. But here again the figures did not justify the conclusion. The Non-intercourse Act had been passed at the close of 1808; and our imports from the United States had amounted in that year to only 3,992,060*l.*; while our exports to that country were placed at 5,302,866*l.* They had risen in 1809 to

5,187,615*l.* and 7,460,768*l.* respectively; and in 1810 to 7,813,317*l.* and 11,217,685*l.*[1] It was obvious therefore that the passage of the Non-intercourse Act was not followed by any loss of American trade, but had been accompanied with a large increase of our commercial transactions with the United States.

It is true that in 1811 our trade with America suffered a severe check. Our exports to the United States declined to 1,841,253*l.*; and this decline was possibly partly due to the fact that, in the spring of that year, the American Government determined to enforce the provisions of the Non-intercourse Act of 1808 more strictly. But, it must be remembered, that our trade with the United States was not the only branch of our commerce which suffered in 1811. Our export trade in that year fell from 47,000,926*l.* to 30,850,618*l.* Some other cause, then, besides the Orders in Council, must be responsible for this great decrease. It is fair to assume that the decimation of our American trade may have been attributable to the same reason which was destroying the rest of our commerce.

An attempt has been made in a previous chapter to show that the great crisis of 1811 was really occasioned by the apparent prosperity of previous years. An inflated currency had produced speculation; an excited money-market had involved an unduly extended trade; a too extensive trade had

[1] Parl. Return, 1812.

glutted the foreign markets. The crash came. The price of gold fell, in a few months, from 4*l.* 10*s.* to 4*l.* an ounce. The brokers who had speculated on a rise were ruined by the fall. Their ruin was necessarily communicated to the commercial classes. The foreign markets, glutted already, were unable to afford relief; and a crisis of probably unexampled severity ensued.

But it is evident that, if this crisis had been due to the Orders in Council, it would have occurred in 1808, and not in 1811. The most that can be fairly said of it is that it was intensified by the action of the United States; and that the course on which the latter resolved was partly attributable to the Orders in Council. But, testing the Orders in Council by their results, it is only fair to acknowledge, first, that they reduced the French Customs to one-fifth of their amount; and second, that, during the first three years of their existence, the trade of the country, so far from having suffered from them, increased in an unprecedented manner.

If then a judgment is to be pronounced on the merits of these famous Orders, we must admit that, on two out of the three points on which they have been commonly arraigned, they are entitled to a verdict in their favour. But the third count still remains for consideration. Nine persons out of every ten probably assume that the Orders in Council of 1807 and 1809 were responsible for the withdrawal of the American ambassador in 1810, and the war with the

United States in 1812. But this contention may be disposed of in a single sentence. Perceval's Government, at the commencement of 1811, was ready to repeal the Orders in Council; but they declined to abandon their right to blockade unfortified places.[1] The war then of 1812 was due not to the Orders themselves; but to our claims of blockade; and these claims, which are substantially similar to those which the United States themselves maintained in the late civil war, were first enforced, not by Perceval, but by Fox! With, then, a fervent admiration for the principles of free trade, with every desire to carry those principles far beyond the point which they have hitherto attained, the present writer is unable to blame the Portland-Perceval cabinet for imposing the Orders, or the Perceval cabinet for continuing them. So long as we agree to recognise the expediency of fettering trade for the sake of obtaining a revenue for ourselves, we must in consistency admit the possibility of regulating trade to damage the enemy. This was the object the Ministry of 1807 had in view. In this object they, beyond all question, succeeded; and their success was accompanied by a marked and rapid expansion of our own commercial transactions.

The first preliminary struggle which the American crisis produced, in the Session of 1812, was on a motion of Whitbread's for papers. Lord Wellesley, it

[1] Pearce's 'Wellesley.'

is fair to say, had been extremely anxious that all the papers should be laid on the table. 'I wish to suggest,' he wrote to Perceval on the 29th January, 'that it would be proper *now* to grant the fullest information on the American question. I think you will be of my opinion as soon as you have read Mr. Forster's despatches.' 'I confess,' he wrote again on the 1st of Febuary, 'that my opinion is entirely different from that which you state respecting the production of the American papers to Parliament. I think that we ought, immediately, to lay *all* of them before Parliament. I most anxiously hope that you will not prevent me from the discharge of this duty, which, in my opinion, affords the best chance of avoiding a war with America. Our case is yet imperfectly known: I think it is solid and clear. I must therefore (excuse the phrase) most seriously remonstrate against the notion of withholding the documents in my office, which will (in my judgment) fully explain to the public the true nature of our dispute with America.' 'I am very much concerned,' he wrote again on the 12th, 'to find that my opinion, in favour of the production of a portion of the American papers to Parliament, is not likely to meet with the concurrence of the Cabinet. Further consideration of the subject has certainly confirmed my judgment of the advantage which would be derived to our cause by producing at least such of the instructions as contain the explanation of the prin-

ciples on which the Orders of Council were founded, and are still continued in force.

'It is extremely disagreeable to me, in the very peculiar situation in which I am now placed, to urge any difference of opinion against the sentiments of the Cabinet; and I therefore wish to leave the decision to them, without giving any further trouble than the statement of my sentiments, as described in this note.'

Whitbread moved for papers on the 13th February. The moment was a critical one. 'No one knew whether Perceval was Minister, or whether he had been dismissed from the Regent's counsels. Curwen, in a strong speech against the Orders, spoke of his satisfaction in knowing that 'the Ministers would not be long enough in their places to carry' their policy much further. 'Whatever golden dreams,' replied Perceval, amid the cheers of his supporters, 'might be indulged on this subject, he must say that, as far as he knew anything about the matter, he rather imagined that the honourable gentleman would find that his consolatory prospects would not open upon him quite so pleasantly as he had imagined.' Whitbread subsequently took this as a declaration that Perceval was to be continued in office. 'The right honourable gentleman had told the country, in no very obscure terms, that he was to be the Prince Regent's Minister.' Perceval, who was sitting next to Plumer Ward, observed that he never said so, and took a note to explain, but never

made the explanation: and there was consequently a 'great sensation in the streets, clubs, &c., caused by Perceval's declaration.'

Whitbread's motion for papers was rejected by 136 votes to 23. '*O si sic omnia*,' said Perceval to his supporters in the lobby.[1]

Five days afterwards Alexander Baring moved for some papers in respect to the issue of Trade Licenses. But his motion was not pressed to a division. And, on the 3rd March, Brougham made his famous motion for a Select Committee on the Orders in Council. The Opposition was in high spirits. Turton, on the previous Thursday, had only been beaten by 73; and the comparative smallness of the majority was supposed to augur well for the future. Canning had passed over to the Opposition. There were rumours that Lord Lonsdale had withdrawn his support; and the merchants generally were supposed to be prepared to oppose. 'The debate was sufficiently animated, and lasted till five in the morning. Brougham opened it in a long declamatory speech of very loud tone . . . answered by Rose . . . heavy enough. Baring replied with a speech still heavier. Canning spoke about midnight, and as he had been the most active supporter of the Orders in Council, both in the Cabinet and the debates of the House, we were curious to know how political ingenuity would help him to an

[1] Hansard, xxi. 776, 782, 794, 801; Ward, i. 412.

argument in favour of the vote he was to give. Happily for the cause of political virtue, he failed, and failed so woefully that not even any gilding could be derived from his oratory to hide the dirt . . . . . Perceval, who never was in more force, nor spoke better, demolished him piecemeal, and asked if he had forgotten the measure they had so often fought together against the side on which he was now going to vote, and whether it was not that, the French having said that no nation on earth should trade with us, our answer under the Orders was that no nation on earth should trade with them except through us.'[1] Brougham's motion was rejected by 216 votes to 144. But Brougham was not discouraged by this defeat. He called upon friends in all parts of the country to get up petitions against the Orders; and all the great manufacturing towns immediately responded to his suggestion. The presentation of these petitions led at various times to short debates; and on the 28th April, Lord Stanley proposed that the petitions should be referred to the consideration of a committee of the whole House. The Government assented to the motion. The committee was agreed to; it was ordered to meet the next day; to sit from day to day, and witnesses were, on the motion of Brougham, directed to attend.

[1] Plumer Ward, i. 447; Hansard, xxi. 1163.

The committee met accordingly for the first time on the following day. Sir Thomas Turton raised a short debate on the motion that the Speaker do leave the chair, which gave Perceval an opportunity for explaining his reasons for assenting to the proceedings. 'He considered it,' he said, 'to be due to the petitioners to ascertain the full extent of their grievances, while at the same time they might determine to persevere in that line of policy most beneficial to the general interests of the empire.' The House then resolved itself into committee. Some gentlemen from Birmingham were called in and examined by Brougham; and the inquiry formally began.

For some days the examination of witnesses proceeded. On Monday the 11th May, Brougham, as usual, moved the order of the day for going into committee. Babington took the chair; Robert Hamilton, a manufacturer of earthenware in Staffordshire, was summoned for examination; and Brougham, after complaining of Perceval's absence, commenced to examine him. One of the members started off to Downing Street to summon the Minister. Brougham went on with his questions; finished his examination in chief; and Stephen, the real originator of the Orders, commenced the cross-examination of the witness. In the meantime the member who had gone to fetch Perceval had met the Minister in Parliament Street. Perceval charac-

teristically darted forward to the House. The lobby was comparatively full; a tall man, in a tradesman's dress, was standing by the door through which the Minister passed into it. He placed a pistol at Perceval's breast and fired. Perceval walked on one or two paces, faintly uttered, 'Oh! I am murdered,' and fell on the floor.

* * *

The affair had been so instantaneous that no one knew what had happened. Perceval had fallen at William Smith's feet; and Smith, till he raised up the body, had not recognised the murdered man. An officer of the House called out, 'Where is the rascal that fired?' and the tall man rose up from his seat, and said, 'I am the unfortunate man.' General Gascoigne seized the man with so much violence that he said afterwards that he feared his arm would have been broken. Other members in the meanwhile assisted in securing the assassin. The man was searched; and another pistol, still loaded, and some papers were found on him.

Perceval's body had, by this time, been placed in a room in the Speaker's house. Medical aid had been called in to pronounce all such aid useless. Lord Arden, in an agony of grief, was standing by his brother's side, and Lord Redesdale had undertaken to break the catastrophe to Mrs. Perceval.

* * * *

The shot by which Perceval had fallen had been heard in the House of Commons. For the moment

the business of the day was not interrupted; a moment later a confused whisper of 'some one has been shot' ran through the House. A rush was made to the door; and the truth became known.

The Speaker was summoned from his house by the intelligence; and took the chair. The assassin was led up to the table between two of the officers of the House. General Gascoigne, the member for Liverpool, identified him as John Bellingham; the Speaker detained him till a Middlesex Magistrate was obtainable; and then had him escorted, under a strong guard of members, to the prison-room of the Serjeant-at-arms.

* * * *

The murderer, Bellingham, was a native of St. Neots in Huntingdonshire; his father, a land-surveyor, had been in confinement as a lunatic and had died mad. Bellingham himself had commenced life as a jeweller's apprentice; had been subsequently nominated to a cadetship in the East India Service; had been wrecked on his passage out; abandoned his profession; returned home, and had commenced life again as a tin-plate worker.

Misfortune followed him; his house was burnt down; Bellingham became bankrupt; set up without capital as an insurance broker; married, and was unhappy in his marriage; entered a merchant's office in Liverpool, and was sent as their commission-agent to the White Sea. Here he drew bills on his principals to the amount of 10,000*l.*; squandered the money;

made no shipments in return; sailed for England; and on his arrival was thrown into prison for breach of contract. Ultimately we find him again in Archangel; and again unlucky; arrested for debt; and appealing in vain to the English Ambassador, who saw that his arrest was legal, and who declined to interfere.[1]

Bellingham was for five years in prison. On his discharge, he returned to England, and endeavoured to obtain redress through the interposition of the British Government. He appealed, though always unsuccessfully, to Lord Leveson Gower, Lord Wellesley, and Perceval. 'Perceval,' wrote Sir S. Romilly, 'as was his duty, refused to listen to these applications; but he could hardly have accompanied his refusal with any harshness, for few men had ever less harshness in their nature than he had.'[2] These repeated refusals worked on a mind that was constitutionally disposed to derangement, and had been perhaps weakened by long confinement in a Russian prison. He determined to avenge himself on the Ministry from whom he was unable to obtain redress; and carried out his determination by shooting the Prime Minister. 'No person,' wrote Romilly, 'can have heard what the conduct and demeanour of the man has been since he committed the crime, or can have read his defence, without being satisfied that he is mad: *but it is a species of madness which pro-*

[1] Epitomised from 'All the Year Round,' Dec. 1, 1866.

[2] Autobiography, iii. 35.

bably for the security of mankind ought not to exempt a man from being answerable for his actions.'[1] But though, even in Romilly's view, the execution of the murderer was justifiable, it is difficult either to justify or excuse the haste with which the punishment was inflicted. The Assizes happened to be going on when the murder was committed. The prisoner was at once indicted for the crime. His Counsel's plea for time was overruled; and the man was hanged within seven days of the time on which he had assassinated Perceval.[2]

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[1] Autobiography, iii. 36.

[2] A short time after this work was concluded, and when arrangements had been already made for its publication, the writer learned from his friend, Mr. Gurdon,—Mr. Gladstone's private secretary,—that four large boxes of Perceval's papers had been discovered in the vaults of the Treasury.

The discovery necessitated some slight modifications in the original plan, and enabled a few additions of importance to be made to the work. But the majority of the letters were of no value. Solicitations for place; applications for interviews; suggestions for new taxation; the miscellaneous correspondence of a busy minister; had been tied up in alphabetical bundles, and had lain forgotten for more than half a century.

Looking through these numerous documents, the writer suddenly came upon a small packet which attracted his attention. It consisted of Bellingham's letters to Perceval.

The first of them was a petition, dated 22nd May 1810, stating, 'That Petitioner, having suffered a long and improper detention in Russia, has applied to His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council for redress; and it appears, by their lordships' answer, to be of a nature not in their power to grant. Petitioner therefore most humbly solicits that your Excellency (Perceval) will be pleased to grant him leave to bring a Petition into the Honourable House of Commons this Session. Petitioner's Petition

On the morning which followed Perceval's death, the Speaker wrote to the more prominent members on both sides of the House to beg them to meet at his house at three that day, and 'consult upon the proper course of recommending Perceval's family to the protection of the Crown.' Ponsonby, the leader of the Opposition; Whitbread, Perceval's chief opponent; Ryder, his greatest friend; Canning, who had

is lodged at His Majesty's Council Office for their lordships' perusal and alteration if necessary.

'And Petitioner, &c.

(Signed) 'JOHN BELLINGHAM.'

Bellingham seems to have brought the petition himself to Downing Street, for there is a docket on it in Herries,'—Perceval's private secretary's—handwriting, 'Answered him verbally the 22nd May, that Mr. Perceval could not give permission for the introduction of his petition.'

Four days afterwards Bellingham again addressed the Minister. 'It has been intimated to me by Mr. Harris (*i.e.*, Herries), that it is not your Excellency's intention to make a representation to His Majesty in my favour; if so, I shall be excluded the possibility of bringing a petition to Parliament, which is, undoubtedly, the birthright of every Englishman.' The letter was a long one, and enclosed a copy of his petition of the previous March to the Privy Council: and Perceval's private secretary was desired to reply to it 'that the time for presenting private petitions has long since passed, and that Mr. P. cannot encourage you to expect his sanction in introducing into the House a petition which, Mr. P. thinks, is not of a nature for the consideration of Parliament.'

No other letter of Bellingham's for nearly two years is among the Perceval papers. On the 12th March, 1812, he addressed to Perceval, in common with every other member of the House of Commons, a printed circular, enclosing printed copies of a petition to the House, and of replies which he had received from Ryder's private secretary. These printed documents Perceval's private secretary seems simply to have placed with the other papers.

seceded from him; Castlereagh, who had rejoined him; these all obeyed the Speaker's summons. There, too, was Wilberforce, anxious that 'no opposition should tarnish the grace and honour of the grant;' Bankes, who, on the very day of the Minister's death, had been consulting on the means of defeating him again on the Sinecures Bill; Bathurst, who was to join him on Rose's retirement; Vansittart, who succeeded him at the Exchequer; Sir William Grant, the brilliant Master of the Rolls; Scott, the Chancellor's brother. Castlereagh told them that the Regent was intending to send a message to the House recommending a grant of 50,000*l.* for the children, and an annuity of 2000*l.* a-year for Mrs. Perceval. Men of all parties were unanimous in their approval of the Regent's proposal.

An hour after the meeting at the Speaker's, the House met. The Benches were crowded; 'in most faces there was an agony of tears.' Castlereagh brought up the Prince's message, and explained the intentions of the Government. The task had fallen on him, because Ryder's feelings were 'too powerfully affected to allow him to undertake it.' But Castlereagh himself was unable to complete his speech. He was 'so much affected that he was obliged to sit down amidst the loud cheers and strong sympathy of the House.' Ponsonby, the leader of the Opposition, rose to second the address, which Castlereagh, on behalf of the Government, had

proposed. But Ponsonby was hardly more able than Castlereagh to give utterance to his sentiments. 'No man,' so he wound up a short speech, 'thought Mr. Perceval's political opinions more erroneous than he had always done; but he entertained the highest opinion of his honour, and the greatest affection to his person. He had known him in early life; and he had never known a man of greater worth. As a husband, as a father, as a friend, no man was more to be admired. As they could not restore a life so dear to all, they ought to do that which alone was in their power, and to alleviate the distresses of his family, and render the remnant of their lives as far comfortable as they could, and if possible happy.' Canning rose, after Ponsonby had sat down, to testify, as well as his grief would enable him, 'to the virtues and talents of a man whose loss all parties agreed in deploring, and of whom it might with peculiar truth be said that, whatever was the strength and extent of political hostility, he had never, before the last calamity, provoked against himself a private enemy.' And Whitbread, 'as a marked and determined political antagonist of the right honourable gentleman,' added, when Canning sat down, a more generous tribute still: 'That it was impossible there could be a man more distinguished for his private virtues, every one acquainted with the right honourable gentleman admitted and was anxious to declare. Among his public virtues, the right honourable gentleman had one which he

begged to mark for the benefit and example of posterity. The right honourable gentleman had uniformly displayed a most perfect and unceasing control of temper in that House. He hoped that, beyond the door of that House, he had never on any occasion carried a feeling of resentment or displeasure against any one of its members; against the right honourable gentleman he had ever found it impossible to carry such a feeling even as far as the door.'[1]

The House agreed unanimously to the Address. On a suggestion of Wynn's it was agreed that it should be presented to the Regent by the whole House; and three hundred gentlemen in mourning waited on His Royal Highness with it. Two days afterwards, the House, on Castlereagh's motion, resolved itself into a Committee 'to consider of making a provision for the family of Mr. Perceval.' Castlereagh proposed that 50,000*l.* should be granted to the children, and 2000*l.* a-year to Mrs. Perceval for life. The unanimity was for the first time disturbed. Herbert of Muckross insisted on the propriety of voting an additional 10,000*l.* for the eldest son. Holme Sumner thought the grant 'wholly inadequate,' and insisted that on Mrs. Perceval's death the annuity should descend to her eldest son. Hawkins Browne proposed making the grant 60,000*l.* It was in vain that Perceval's truer friends pressed for

[1] Hansard, xxiii. 172.

moderation. It was in vain that Wilberforce, though he admitted that the vote was not perhaps 'one millionth part of the worth of Mr. Perceval,' dilated on the advantage of unanimity. It was in vain that the Ministry themselves proposed that Holme Sumner's resolution, continuing the annuity of 2000*l.* after Mrs. Perceval's death to her eldest son, should be rejected. The House turned a deaf ear to Wilberforce; and defeated the Government by 107 votes to 67.[1]

The liberality of the House had already been excessive, but it was carried on the following day still further. Huskisson proposed to grant Perceval's eldest son an annuity of 1000*l.* during his mother's lifetime. The proposal led to a discussion; but the Opposition dared not divide. The resolution was carried without a division. On the 15th Lord Clive proposed a public monument to the late Minister in Westminster Abbey. The proposal led to a new debate. A small section of the Opposition resisted it on the ground that the grant would imply a recognition of services which they were prepared to dispute. However much we may sympathise with their conduct in resisting the efforts of those who were pushing the liberality of Parliament to an excessive extreme, we may marvel at their reluctance to vote a public monument to a Minister who had met with such a death at such a time.

[1] Hansard, xxxiii. 199.

Lord Clive's proposal was carried by 199 votes to 26.[1] Within three days of Perceval's death, the House had voted a monument to his memory, and had made a liberal provision for his widow and his children. Three days before, when Lord Arden had stood by his brother's dead body in the Speaker's chamber, he had exclaimed, in an agony of grief, 'He is gone to the happiness which he merited, but his children—his dear children, what will become of them?' and an honourable member who was present had, with great feeling and readiness, replied, 'My lord, be comforted, they are the children of his country!'[2] It would be indecent for the present writer to blame an excessive liberality, which it would perhaps be impossible to defend. It is for him to acknowledge the noble manner in which the House in three short days had redeemed the voluntary pledge of one of its members!

Perceval had fallen on the Monday. He was buried, on the following Saturday, in Lord Egmont's family vault at Charlton. His family had desired that the ceremony should be private; but complete privacy was hardly possible. The pall was supported by Lord Eldon, the Chancellor; Lord Liverpool, the future Minister; Lord Harrowby and Richard Ryder, Perceval's most intimate associates. Twenty-one private carriages followed, and a body of the City Light Horse, a corps of which Perceval had been a member, and, later on, the Treasurer, joined the

[1] Hansard, xxiii. 230. [2] Ibid. 217.

procession at Newington Butts. Public monuments were erected to the Minister's memory in Westminster Abbey, Lincoln's Inn Chapel, and at Northampton.

So lived, and so died, this great and good man. The news of his death was received with horror and regret. A few turbulent spirits indeed at Nottingham, Leicester, London, and other places, made the announcement a signal for riot and disorder. But these were only exceptions to the ordinary rule. Never was there so general a feeling of horror and dismay as that which was almost universally elicited by the Minister's assassination.

This memoir would be incomplete if no attempt were made in it to paint the character of the man whose life it has been its object to record. Yet it is no easy matter to accomplish this task. On two separate occasions it has been attempted, at some length, by men who knew Perceval well. Brougham's opinion of him has been cited in more than one instance in this memoir. Plumer Ward's warm admiration of him has been seen in more than one occasion in its concluding chapters. Thirteen years after his death, Ward wrote a very singular and nearly forgotten novel called 'Tremaine.' The novel was intended to resist the spread of infidelity, and would probably be considered a dull production by the present generation. In the middle of the third volume, Tremaine is walking on a charming

terrace, near Orleans, on the banks of the Loire, with his friend Evelyn. A shot from below strikes his hat; a cry of 'Garde, garde!' announces the approach of danger. The friends run to a little gate, close it behind them, just in time to shut out a mad dog, who is shot immediately afterwards by the *garde de chasse*. Tremaine ascribes his safety to accident; Evelyn his deliverance to Providence; and the two friends, the philosopher and the Christian, engage, for the best part of half a volume, in a controversy on the interference of Providence in the ordinary affairs of mankind. After an argument of more than fifty pages, Tremaine endeavours to refute the Providential government of the world by citing instances of the success of evil, and the suffering of the good; the career of Sylla, the death of Socrates, the martyrdom of Isaiah, the rule of Nero, the horrible crimes of Kirk; 'the impiety' of considering that God permitted such good men as Isaiah to suffer; the horror of supposing that vice and cruelty, such as Kirk's, should have been authorized by God. Evelyn, for another fifty pages, replies at length to his doubting friend, dilates on the doctrine of free-will, and the possibility that Kirk's victim might have herself been faulty?

'"You keep me at arm's length, I allow," said Tremaine, "even on this shocking case. I will now, however, come nearer home (alas! how near), and will mention one where malevolence itself has never imagined blame."

'"I wait for it," said Evelyn.

'"The death of Perceval!" returned Tremaine. "Of all the cases, in which man seems to have been abandoned by Heaven, and which leave the upholder of Providence without hope, I have always thought this the clearest. I am not even yet recovered from the shock it gave me, in common with the whole nation. I saw him struck; I saw him die; and, though I had opposed his measures, I gave him, with many others—antagonists as well as friends—tears, from which I sometimes can scarcely now refrain."

'Evelyn was agitated, for he had known and greatly loved this admirable person.

'"He was a man," continued Tremaine, "so pure, so honest, so clear in his great office, so perfect in private life, that to name him seemed to be to name virtue. But that such a man, the delight of his friends, the adoration of his family, the admiration of his opponents; that one so mild, yet so brave; so single-hearted, yet so keen; should be cut off by murder in the very bosom of the Senate, and of his country, where a thousand arms would have raised themselves to defend him—that such a thing should be leads us for ever to despair of that protection from Heaven which, you tell me, not only *can be*, but *is* afforded to mankind. For,

"Cadit et Ripheus justissimus unus
Qui fuit in Teucris et servantissimus æqui."

'Here Tremaine was absolutely stopped by his feelings.

'"My admiration of Mr. Perceval," replied Evelyn, with almost equal emotion, "was so great, my gratitude for his friendship so sincere, his talents were so commanding, his genius so penetrating, yet his simplicity so primitive, that I can only join you in this warm and merited eulogy. I may truly say, I love you the more for loving him; and you could not have mentioned an event more calculated to stagger me, than the catastrophe of this excellent person. Still, I lose not my confidence; and, though I am terrified and astounded at the contemplation of this cruel murder, permitted, as you say, in the very lap of his country, upon one of its brightest and best citizens; though I humble myself in fear and trembling before the mysterious Being that could have warded the blow, and did not; still I am convinced all was done in wisdom—wisdom, though impenetrable. Possibly, to the victim itself, it might have been mercy. That it was wrath to him, so amiable, and, though unwarned, so prepared, I cannot believe. The manner of his death, to us horrid, was probably to himself not worse, possibly not so bad, as some natural disease of which men do die. It was instant and without pain; and, as I observed, if ever man was prepared on so sudden a warning it was he.

'"The rest must ever be impervious, even to

conjecture. The proved goodness of God, and His concern for the happiness of His creatures at large, show that this illustrious sacrifice could not be an exception. I console myself with God's own words in the mouth of the greatest of his prophets: "The righteous perish, and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous are taken away from the evil to come."'[1]

It might perhaps be wise to end this memoir with this beautiful tribute to the subject of it. But Perceval's memory cannot be allowed to rest on the testimony of only one warm friend. Plumer Ward's opinion may be supported by the testimony of another authority whose name must be familiar to most persons intimate with the history of the earlier portion of the century. Eleven months before Perceval died Denis Browne addressed to him a very singular letter:—

'*Westport, June 7th*, 1811.

'My dear Sir,—The unfortunate and lamented change in the health of the King, and the consequences that appear as necessarily to follow, induce me to trouble you again with assurances of my devoted and respectful esteem. These sentiments have grown with my observation of your public life; and are, I believe, in unison with those of every loyal and rational and honest man in this empire. You have in that public life panegyrised him whom I will presume to call our great master, Mr. Pitt, in his foresight and sagacity.

'Your Ministry has produced consequences following:—the establishing and acting on the great constitutional prin-

[1] Tremaine, iii. 217–219.

ciples laid down by Mr. Pitt, and drawn from his great original mind, on the Regency question. During your Ministry the French have, after breaking all the great Continental powers of Europe, been driven (their best armies and best generals) from the kingdom of our ally. You have not only made your own country beat the beaters, and established it as great on the land as it has ever been on the seas, but you have also roused that ally into military character. Your finance system for this year, by which you have displayed the energies and resources of your country to the world—though last, not least, the measure in contemplation, the interchange of the militia of these islands; great, I know, beyond common conception in its consequences, as giving Ireland a security that will make its task of government easy to your successors. If I were to think of my country only, I would lament the change that is to take place; but, feeling for you and my friends in administration . . . . forgive me for saying that, when it shall appear good to you to hand over the Government . . . . I shall not lament it.'

Such was Denis Browne's opinion, expressed (not very grammatically) at the time, and Ward's far neater and more beautiful tribute, written many years afterwards. To these opinions little need be added on Perceval's character.

Whatever difference of opinion may exist of his qualifications as a Minister, no two opinions have ever been expressed on his character as a man. In his own house, he was the best of parents, the best of husbands; in society, his genial manners and playful wit won him a host of friends; his perfect temper preserved him from a single private enemy. 'Perceval,' said Wilberforce, 'had the sweetest of all

possible tempers, and was one of the most conscientious men I ever knew; the most instinctively obedient to the dictates of conscience; the least disposed to give pain to others; the most charitable and truly kind and generous creature I ever knew."[1] 'One must ever mourn for the loss of so excellent a man as Mr. Perceval,' wrote the Princess Elizabeth to Miss Scott. 'I have learnt facts of poor Perceval's life,' wrote Lord Eldon himself, 'which I never should have learned but in consequence of his death, and which prove him to have been a most extraordinary excellent person.'[2] 'The admirable Perceval,' was the epithet which the Duke of Newcastle, seventeen years afterwards, applied to him.[3] 'The mild and good Perceval,' was Plumer Ward's description of him.[4] Such are only a few of the opinions which his friends recorded of him. Here is what one of the foremost of his political opponents wrote of him: 'As a private man,' said Sir S. Romilly, 'I had a very great regard for Perceval. We went the same circuit together, and for many years I lived with him in a very delightful intimacy. No man could be more generous, more kind, or more friendly than he was. No man ever in private life had a nicer sense of honour. Never was there, I believe, a more affectionate husband or a more tender parent. It did not proceed from him that of late years our

[1] Memoirs, iv. 26.
[2] Twiss, 'Eldon,' iii. 302 and 225.
[3] Blackwood, xxv. 68.
[4] Diary, i. 325.

intimacy was totally interrupted. He would, I have no doubt, have been glad to have obliged me in everything that I could wish, and that without any view of detaching me from my political friends, but from a personal regard to me. It was I who refused his repeated invitations, and shrank from his kindness and friendship; but I could not endure the idea of living privately in intimacy with a man whose public conduct I in the highest degree disapproved, and whom, as a Minister, I was constantly opposing.'[1]

Perceval's private virtues were in fact so great that his satirists used them as the basis of their attacks on his public conduct. 'You spend a great deal of ink about the character of the present Prime Minister,' said Peter Plymley, in his second letter to brother Abraham. 'Grant you all that you write: I say, I fear that he will ruin Ireland, and pursue a line of policy destructive to the true interest of his country; and then you tell me that he is faithful to Mrs. Perceval, and kind to the Master Percevals! These are undoubtedly the first qualifications to be looked to in a time of the most serious danger. But, somehow or another, if public and private virtues must always be incompatible, I should prefer that he destroyed the domestic happiness of Wood and Cockell, owed for the veal of the preceding year, whipped his boys, and saved his country.'

[1] Romilly, iii. 37.

The unanimous testimony, then, of friend and foe may be cited to prove the extraordinary excellencies of Perceval's private character. But private virtues, however pleasing they may be, constitute alone no claim to public gratitude. If Sydney Smith's view of Perceval's political conduct was correct, the Minister's private virtues could not atone for his public imperfections.

What opinion then must be formed of Perceval's public conduct, as a barrister and as a statesman? His career as a barrister may be very shortly treated. Whitbread called him once 'an adventurer from the bar.'[1] It was scoffingly said of him that he had not business enough to keep a clerk. The answer to such statements as these is simple. Perceval's career at the bar is divisible into three parts. During the

[1] The remark was made within a month of Perceval's death on a debate on the Barrack Estimates. Whitbread had made a hot attack on the war, the Orders in Council, and on Perceval. Perceval had replied warmly, and had been lustily cheered by the House. Whitbread rose again, 'evidently in great agitation.' 'The House of Commons,' he said, 'was a fine place! the constitution of England was a great thing! everything was to be admired when an adventurer from the bar was raised by his talent for debate to a great situation; but a great situation which nobody but himself would have accepted under such circumstances.' These remarks, we are told, excited great disorder, and a warm debate ensued. Stephen, in the course of it, observed, 'His right hon. friend's dexterity must certainly be very formidable, when there was no person on the other side who would venture to change places with him. His fame, which was progressively increasing, would increase to ages.' — *Hansard*, xxi. 309 and 315.

first of them, which closed at the commencement of 1796, he was a junior. He displayed, during that time, such abilities and acquired so much business that Lord Loughborough, as we have seen, conferred on him his silk gown with unusual compliments. From 1796 to 1801 he was a King's Counsel, contending against Erskine, Law, Gibbs, Garrow, Mungay, and others, his seniors at the bar, established in great practice. There cannot then be much wonder that, under such circumstances, he should have failed in five years to place himself on a level with these great competitors. During the whole of this period too he had a seat in Parliament; and his duties in the Legislature necessarily occupied a considerable portion of his time. Yet his business increased from year to year; his abilities were so generally known that the author of the 'Welsh Judge' records an opinion that, if he had adhered to his profession, he would have become a first-rate leader. Brougham himself arrived at the same conclusion. His subsequent success at the Chancery bar from 1801 to 1807 may be inferred from the extracts which have already been given from his fee book. It is fair to remember that the considerable income, which he made in 1806, was earned when the practical leadership of the Opposition in the House of Commons imposed on him labours of an unprecedented nature for any lawyer.

But Perceval's reputation must depend on his career in Parliament, and not on his career at the

bar. Can he be considered a great Minister? Is his policy capable of defence? The judgment of posterity must necessarily depend on the answer which can be returned to these two questions. Posterity, it must be admitted, have been nearly unanimous in their answer. 'Narrow, harsh, factious, and illiberal,' such is Napier's opinion of the Minister. 'A third-rate statesman,' is the verdict of an anonymous writer in 'All the Year Round,' whom Earle in his 'British Premiers' quotes approvingly. 'It was reserved for Mr. Perceval to show that Addington was not the weakest possible Minister,' is the sentence in which Mr. Massey has alluded to him.

Posterity is probably a better judge of a man's policy than contemporary writers. A man's contemporaries are misled by the causes which mislead him himself. The historian is free from the prejudices with which the actors are themselves involved. But a contemporary critic is a much better judge of a Minister's power than a later writer. For subsequent writers are ignorant of the real difficulties and embarrassments of a past age; and are incapable of appreciating the tact with which they are overcome. So far then as Perceval's power is concerned we may safely appeal from the judgment of history to the opinion of his contemporaries. With all deference to Mr. Massey, the historian is, in this respect, bound to reflect the judgment of a past age. Of the opinion which his contemporaries entertained of Per-

ceval's extraordinary power in the House, numerous examples have already been cited. Perhaps it is only necessary to add to these the opinion of Peter Plymley. 'You are as powerful,' he begins his famous letters to his brother Abraham by saying, 'in the Vestry *as Mr. Perceval is in the House of Commons.*'

His strength as a Minister will be the more apparent if the circumstances of his Ministry are remembered. During the session of 1810 he was at the head of the remnant of a divided party, engaged in an impracticable defence of an unpopular colleague. During the session of 1811 he was contending in behalf of a helpless king against a majority in Parliament and a Regent who was peculiarly hostile to him. During the session of 1812 he was at the head of a weakened Ministry resisting the combined attacks of Canning and the Opposition. A weak Minister would have thrown over Lord Chatham in 1810, compromised the Regency question in 1811, and abandoned the Orders in Council in 1812. Perceval, on the contrary, never dreamed of compromise. He defended his colleague; he stood up night after night to battle for his old King; he clung to the last hour of his life to his famous Orders. It is easy to appreciate the critic who calls this man an obstinate Minister; it is difficult to understand how anyone can term him a weak one. The man who, without an ally, without any assistance, maintained such a battle for three successive sessions—whatever else

this man may have been, with all deference to Mr. Massey he was not a weak Minister.

In introducing, ten days after Perceval's death, his famous motion for a strong government, Stuart Wortley declared that 'he never, in the course of his experience in that House, met with a man more formed to guide its proceedings with temper and good sense and a conciliatory spirit better than the late Mr. Perceval.' Later in the same debate J. W. Ward declared that 'such was the ability of Mr. Perceval, and such his character both in and out of the House, that it compensated for the weakness and inefficiency of his colleagues.' Cartwright, a few days afterwards, took occasion to speak of 'the transcendent talents of Mr. Perceval.' These are only incidental allusions to Perceval's ability and power.[1]

His great strength in the House unquestionably arose from his powers as a debater. 'Perceval, though by no means an eloquent speaker, was the ablest debater in the House,' wrote the Speaker.[2] 'He was a very acute debater,' a very bitter critic wrote of him in the 'Edinburgh Review,' within two months of his death,[3] 'watchful of every fair advantage against his opponent; and a judge of all those topics which may be pressed, and all those prejudices which may be appealed to, in a popular assembly. His temper was good; and he never lost

[1] Hansard, xxi. 251, 261, 399. [2] Colchester, ii. 312.
[3] Edin. Rev. xx. 30.

sight of the spirit or manners of a gentleman; nor carried his hostility beyond the walls of the House of Commons. With a high contempt for his rashness and ignorance it was impossible not to admire the gallantry with which he pushed his little skiff among the precipices, rocks, and cataracts, determined to effect some narrow and mistaken purpose, or perish in the attempt.' 'Single-handed,' said Matthew Browne in the House of Commons, 'the right honourable gentleman has beaten all the Talents.'

His power as a debater and as a party leader was the more extraordinary from his deficiency in other respects. Peel is said to have once inquired of a warm admirer what he thought was the chief qualification of a Prime Minister. 'I think,' was the ready answer, 'that he should have 20,000*l.* a-year.' 'No! no!' expostulated the wealthy Premier, 'I didn't mean that!' 'I think,' was the equally ready rejoinder, 'he should be five feet ten high.' The story is an amusing illustration of the advantage of wealth and presence to politicians in this country. Perceval had neither the advantage of a good presence nor of a large fortune. His own fortune consisted of a few hundreds a-year; and, though Mrs. Perceval brought him a considerable dower, the large family with which his marriage was blessed must have more than absorbed the proceeds of it. It was impossible for him to consolidate his following by magnificent hospitality. If it had not been for the

generous assistance of Lord Arden, his tenure of office would have thrown him heavily into debt.

Nor could his personal presence have been otherwise than disadvantageous to him. He was thin, pale, and singularly short. 'Little *Peerceval*,' Piggott, who hated him, used to call him. 'Little P. was equal to the occasion,' wrote Lord Eldon (who adored him) to his wife. His portrait was never painted during his lifetime. The pictures which were afterwards prepared may perhaps owe some of their unnatural pallor to the circumstances under which they were produced; but, during his life, he must have been unusually pale. Sydney Smith calls him, on one occasion, the *sallow* surveyor of the meltings; and on another, with much more coarseness, the *sepulchral* Spencer Perceval. When such things could be written of him, we may be satisfied that his pallor was so extraordinary as to be exceptionally noticeable.

That Perceval, with such disadvantages to contend against, should have raised himself to the first place in Parliament is a sufficient proof of his abilities. But we have still to consider the propriety of his policy. There are three charges which have been persistently brought against him: first, the tenacity with which he resisted all reform, both of the representation and of existing abuses; second, the mischievous effects of his Orders in Council; third, his constant opposition to the Roman Catholics. On the first point little can be said, though

that little is very suggestive. It is true that Perceval resisted reforms which have since been conceded, and that he defended sinecures which should have been abolished; but it is also true that these reforms would have been ill suited to the character of the times, and that these sinecures were supposed to be essential to the government of the country. The system was rotten, but its rottenness could hardly be detected by the men who had grown up in it.[1] Parliamentary Reform was no doubt

[1] This apology may possibly appear lame to a modern critic, so it may be desirable to substantiate it. Lord Ellenborough was one of the most remarkable of contemporary statesmen; he was ordinarily neither narrow nor prejudiced in his views; yet Lord Ellenborough thought at least as strongly as Perceval on these subjects. When the Lord Chief Justice of England could write such a letter as the following, the Prime Minister may partly be excused for opposing a good bill:—

'*Private.*

'*St. James' Square, April* 6, 1812.

'My dear Sir,—I have just now had an opportunity of seeing a Bill brought into the House of Commons for abolishing and regulating sinecures, &c. Upon the obvious impolicy of its general object and provisions, as far as respects the patronage of the Crown, I forbear to make any comment. The occasion of my troubling you with this is merely to suggest the gross injustice of it as it applies to the law-offices in my own immediate gift; the patronage of which belongs to me as fully and absolutely in point of law, as a member and appendage of my office, as the right of presentation to any ecclesiastical benefice can belong to any bishop or any patron whatsoever, and cannot be taken from me without a violation of all law, and of all parliamentary precedent and usage on such subjects.

'In very modern times the Duke of Richmond's right to the

wise and desirable; but the period in which Perceval lived was singularly ill adapted for any great

1*s.* duty upon coals imported from Newcastle into the port of London (a right *very* questionable in its origin, and at least *not by any means* clear of doubt), was thought necessary to be redeemed on the part of the public, at what was considered as a fairly equivalent price. An alteration in the process of the Courts of Ireland, by which the annual value of Lord Buckingham's office of Remembrancer in the Exchequer was likely to be much affected, was only allowed by Parliament on terms of indemnity against the diminution in value which such an alteration would produce.

'The interest, which the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, as well as myself, have in the patronage of several of our offices, is larger and more beneficial than what belongs to other patrons; inasmuch as a power of sale is virtually recognised in them by 5 & 6 Ed. VI., as to all offices which had been usually sold before the passing of that Act. And, although I have never exercised this right in any instance, nor, from the state of my family, is it likely that I should wish to do so, yet it is a right which upon no principle of justice can be taken away from either the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas or myself without adequate compensation. At any rate, no alteration in this or in any other respect, affecting the nature and duties of any office and its emoluments, should be allowed to take place not only *until after* (as the Bill affects to provide) *the expiration of any legally vested interest in any of the enumerated offices*, BUT ALSO "*until the several interests and rights of patronage now by law vested in the persons now having respectively the right of nomination and appointment to such offices shall have ceased and become extinct.*"

'If the Bill should ever get into Committee, I will request the favour of being allowed to wait upon you in order to suggest some amendments and qualifications which in that event common justice will require to be introduced into it.

'In respect to my own office I will take the liberty of stating that, in proportion to its labour and importance, it is the worst-paid office in Westminster Hall. Its salary has received no increase since 1734; during which period the salary of every other judicial officer has been at least doubled. The only increase in

changes. The whole mind of the country was necessarily concentrated on the great struggle it

value it has received is from the increase of its business, attended with very heavy actual labour, upon which certain fees, which constitute a part of its receipts, depend. Its salary of 4000*l.* (granted in 1734) is subject to every species of taxation which then existed or has since been imposed. Whereas the 4000*l.* per annum, which all the other judges receive, is exempted from every tax, except the property tax. And I assure you that the annual value of the office is so little adequate to the expenses of the station, liberally and properly sustained, that I am obliged to draw from my private income some thousands every year of my life for that purpose. My only indemnity is the provision it may enable me to make for my family, and which this Bill seeks in a great measure to take from me.

'The proposed reduction of the number of offices, and of their profits, and the consolidation of the duties of several efficient offices, is formed under great ignorance and misapprehension of the whole subject, and of the offices it professes to regulate.

'The increase of emolument has mostly arisen from an increase of business in the different offices producing a greater number of fixed small fees. The total of such emolument is not (considering the increased expense of living) more than a fair and liberal compensation for the learning, assiduity, responsibility, and integrity, which the situation demands. I would instance the office of Clerk of the Rolls, which is to be diminished and consolidated with another not very compatible office by the provisions of this Act. The proposed consolidation and union of certain offices of state, viz., that of the clerks of *the Pells with the Privy Seal; the Auditor of the Exchequer with the President of the Council;* is so ludicrous and whimsical that I can hardly persuade myself that the framer of the Bill was in earnest in these particulars. I have to apologise to you for having troubled you so much at length on this subject, its importance in every point of view, both public and private, must be my excuse to you. I remain, my dear sir, with great regard,

'Your faithful humble servant,

'ELLENBOROUGH.'

was conducting. It would have been, probably, as fatal to have initiated great organic changes as it would have been for the Americans, during their great struggle, to have 'changed horses' while they were crossing the stream.

The policy of the Orders in Council has already been so carefully considered in this chapter that it is unnecessary to refer to it again. We have still, however, to refer to the gravest of the charges which have been made against Perceval,—his persistent resistance to the Roman Catholic claims. And here, again, the true defence of his conduct is to be sought in the circumstances in which he lived. During the reign of George the Third the King's prejudices on the subject made it almost impossible for any statesman to dream of Catholic Emancipation. Pitt abandoned it; Fox forbore to press it; Lord Grenville was ready to give it up; Canning and Castlereagh resisted it on the score of time. The only difference between these men and Perceval was that, while they resisted it from considerations of policy, Perceval opposed it on principle. The distinction is, no doubt, from one point of view, great. There is a wide disagreement between a man who thinks particular legislation inopportune and another who deems it unadvisable; but it must be remembered that practical statesmanship is necessarily directed to the wants of the day. It is easy, for instance, to imagine that the time may arrive

when the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church may become a question of pressing importance. It is easy, also, to foresee that, if that time should come, some of the men who defend the Church now will turn round and attack it then. They may, very possibly, rest their arguments then on the *principle* of religious equality, just as they may found their views now on the *principle* of prescriptive right. But it would be a grave injustice to accuse these men of inconsistency then, just as it would be unjust to charge them with intolerance now. Their plastic minds will have moulded themselves to the requirements of the age; they will be only performing the common operation of floating with the stream.

This hypothetical case is no bad illustration of the position of the Catholic question in the reign of George the Third. Any far-sighted person must have foreseen that the Catholics would ultimately succeed in their endeavours. Any clear-sighted person must equally have seen that their agitation for the moment was premature. A great many circumstances, of which the prejudices of the King were the chief, combined to render any haste in the matter unadvisable. And delay could only be obtained by fighting the battle on principle. Perceval fought the battle on principle. Fifteen years after he died Sir Robert Peel was still fighting it on principle. Sir Robert's subsequent career rescued his memory from the charge of intolerance. Perceval's assassination

occurred before the circumstances had arisen which might have effected a change in his views.

It may, however, be thought that a really great Minister should not, on such a subject, have deferred to the wishes of the King, but should have been guided by the desire of Parliament. But those who use this argument forget that in the earlier years of the present century Parliament was as hostile as George the Third himself to the claims of the Catholics. George the Third, indeed, himself removed the 'Talents' Administration from office; but he would have been powerless to have preserved the Duke of Portland if his action had not been approved by Parliament and the constituencies. Nor was it only the enfranchised few who were fired by the cry of 'No Popery.' Intolerance is always fiercest in the lower strata of the population: and a Reform Bill in 1810 would have probably retarded the ultimate emancipation. The country, when Perceval was minister, was strongly Protestant. Perceval was minister because he reflected the opinions of the country.

Nor should those who find fault with the intolerance of the minister forget that he was great then for the very reasons for which they blame him now. Great opposition leaders may be in advance of the opinions of their time. But a minister can only be great if he thinks and acts with the people whom he is serving. Perceval was a typical Englishman of the earlier period of the century. He was the very best mouthpiece the landlords of England ever

obtained, and he lived at a time when the landlords were not merely the governing class, but the most important section of the community. His devotion to his country; his never-failing belief in her ultimate success; his hatred of Napoleon; his distrust of all revolutionary intrigue; his loyalty to the King; his attachment to the Church; his aversion to Popery,—these—conceal it as we may—were the opinions of the great mass of Englishmen in his lifetime. These were the causes of Perceval's popularity in Parliament.

Nor should the present generation forget the uses to which Perceval applied his popularity and power. From his first entry into Parliament, in the summer of 1796, till the date of his assassination, in the spring of 1812, he was consistently animated with a desire to repress the inordinate aims of the French nation. His very first speech in Parliament was in defence of a measure which Pitt had taken with this object. At the very moment of his assassination he was hurrying to the House to support the famous Orders in Council, which had been adopted with the express intention of crippling the French Empire. As an independent member he had supported the war; as the leader of the Opposition he had encouraged the Ministry to persevere in it; as Minister he had resisted every attempt to discontinue the struggle. During the long years which had preceded the Portland Administration, this country had gained many suc-

cesses over the enemy at sea; but no serious attempt had been made to check the career of the French Emperor on the Continent. It was the especial merit of the Cabinet over which the Duke of Portland presided, that it first resolved on the expedition to the Peninsula. It was the especial merit of Perceval and Castlereagh that they saw, amidst the discouragement resulting from the Cintra Convention, additional reason for fresh exertions in the same field. It was the especial merit of Perceval that, with a weakened Cabinet and a divided following, he should have determined, in 1809, on continuing the struggle; and that neither the remonstrances of the Opposition, both in Parliament and the Press, nor the financial embarrassments of 1811, should have turned him from his resolution.

Those who have hitherto related the history of the Peninsular Campaign, have naturally dwelt on the qualifications of the great general by whom it was conducted to a successful issue. The stirring events of the battle-field have formed a nobler theme for the eloquent pen of the historian than the detail of the difficulties of the Minister at home. Yet Perceval's difficulties in 1810, in 1811, and in 1812, were hardly inferior to those of Wellington. In 1810, the whole Opposition were loudly demanding the discontinuance of the struggle; in 1811, they were still insisting on the folly of persevering in it; in 1812, they were repeating their old forebodings; and in 1810, in 1811, and in 1812,

Perceval was the only eminent man in the House of Commons with courage and capacity to reply to their oft-repeated arguments.

The trial would have been great if the financial crisis of 1810-11 had not occurred. The occurrence of this crisis made the trial much greater. Perceval had to carry on the campaign, not merely against the opinion of the Opposition, but with a depreciated currency, an empty treasury, a declining trade, and a consequently dissatisfied people. It was under such circumstances that the Minister persevered; it was under such circumstances that the seeds were sown of the ultimate success of our arms. He persevered. Calm, while all around him were excited; courageous, while they were timid; hopeful, while they were desponding; firm, while they were disposed to yield.

Such was Perceval.[1] A man, whose attachment

[1] The Speaker tells us, on the authority of the late Lord Rokeby, that Perceval had 'strong apprehensions of his impending fate for several days before it took place, and that he had given his will to Mrs. Perceval, with some expressions indicating its probability.'—Diary, 5th June, ii., 386.

The singular dream of Mr. John Williams, the grandfather of the present baronet, Sir F. Williams, has often been narrated. The subjoined account of it is taken from an attested statement, drawn up and signed by Mr. Williams in the presence of the Reverend Thomas Fisher and Mr. Charles Prideaux Brune. It was given by the latter of these gentlemen to the author of this memoir:—

'Some account of a dream which occurred to John Williams, of Scorier House, in the county of Cornwall, in the year 1812.

to the Royal family 'was,' as the Chancellor put it, 'the ruling principle of his heart, and whose attach-

Taken from his own mouth, and narrated by him at various times to several of his friends :—

'Being desired to write out the particulars of a dream which I had in the year 1812, before I do so, I think it may be proper for me to say that at that time my attention was fully occupied with affairs of my own, the superintendence of some very extensive mines in Cornwall being intrusted to me. Thus I had no leisure to pay any attention to political matters, and hardly knew who at that time formed the Administration of the country. It was, therefore, scarcely possible that my own interest in the subject should have had any share in suggesting the circumstances which presented themselves to my imagination. It was, in truth, a subject which never occurred to my waking thoughts. My dream was as follows :—

'About the 2nd or 3rd of May, 1812, I dreamed I was in the lobby of the House of Commons, a place well known to me. A small man, dressed in a blue coat and white waistcoat, entered ; and immediately I saw a person, whom I had observed on my first entrance, dressed in a snuff-coloured coat and yellow metal buttons, take a pistol from under his coat and present it at the little man above mentioned. The pistol was discharged, and the ball entered under the left breast of the person at whom it was directed. I saw the blood issue from the place where the ball had struck him ; his countenance instantly altered, and he fell to the ground. Upon inquiry who the sufferer might be, I was informed that he was the Chancellor. I understood him to be Mr. Perceval, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer. I further saw the murderer laid hold of by several of the gentlemen in the room. Upon waking, I told the particulars related above to my wife. She treated the matter lightly, and desired me to go to sleep, saying it was only a dream. I soon fell asleep again, and again the dream presented itself with precisely the same circumstances. After awaking a second time, and stating the matter again to my wife, she only repeated her request that I would compose myself, and dismiss the subject from my mind. Upon my falling asleep the third time, the same dream without any alteration was repeated ;

ment was rendered important because his virtues were universally known."[1] A man, as Lord Holland

and I awoke, as upon the former occasion, in great agitation. So much alarmed and impressed was I by the circumstance above narrated, that I felt much doubt whether it was not my duty to take a journey to London, and communicate upon the subject with the party principally concerned. Upon this point I consulted some friends, whom I met on business at the Godolphin Mine, on the day following After having stated to them the particulars of the dream itself, and what were my own feelings in relation to it, they dissuaded me from my purpose, saying that I might expose myself to contempt or vexation, or be taken up as a fanatic. Upon this I said no more, but anxiously watched the newspaper every evening as the post arrived. On the evening of the 13th May, as far as I recollect, no account of Mr. Perceval's death was in the newspaper. But my second son, at that time returning from Truro, came in a hurried manner into the room where I was sitting, and exclaimed, "Father, your dream has come true: Mr. Perceval has been shot in the lobby of the House of Commons! There is an account come from London to Truro, written after the newspapers were printed." The fact was, Mr. Perceval was assassinated on the evening of the 11th.

'Some business soon afterwards called me to London; and, in one of the print-shops, I saw a drawing for sale representing the place and the circumstances which attended Mr. Perceval's death. I purchased it; and, upon a careful examination, I found it to coincide in all particulars with the scene which had passed through my imagination in my dreams. The colours of the dresses, the buttons of the assassin's coat, the white waistcoat of Mr. Perceval, the spot of blood upon it, and the countenance and the attitude of the parties present, were exactly what I had dreamed. The singularity of the case, when mentioned among my acquaintance, naturally made it the subject of conversation in London; and, in consequence, my friend, the late Mr. Rennie, was requested by some of the Commissioners of the Navy, that they

[1] Eldon, iii. 205.

put it, who 'united to the most vulgar prejudices and virulent enmities in religion and politics, courage, integrity, and abilities that fortunately very rarely accompany them.'[1] 'A man,' in Lord Wellesley's words, 'of the most irreproachable character, of the most perfect integrity, of the mildest heart, of the most amiable qualities.'[2] 'A man,' as Lord Egremont wrote to Lord Redesdale, 'who united more good and virtuous qualities to a greater reach of intellectual power, and with less alloy of human defect and failing, than I believe ever fell to the lot of any man.'[3] A man, who, as Plumer Ward more tersely put it, combined 'more honesty with more ability than any man alive in his own person.'

might be permitted to hear the circumstances from myself. Two of them accordingly met me at Mr. Rennie's house; and to them I detailed at the time the particulars, then fresh in my memory, which form the subject of the above. I forbear to make any further comment upon the above narration further than to declare solemnly that it is a faithful account of facts as they actually occurred.'

[1] Memoirs, Whig Party, ii. 214. [2] Hansard, xxiii. 170.
[3] Perceval MSS.

THE END.

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